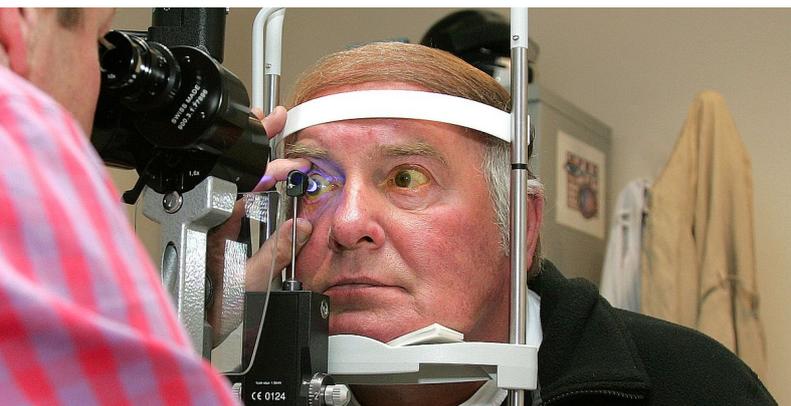


# Delivering Ophthalmology Research in the UK?

## Why you should come to the UK

Ophthalmology is one of 30 specialties within the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Network (CRN) which brings together communities of clinical practice to provide national networks of research expertise. Our membership is made up of research-active clinicians and practitioners drawn from national and local levels, who ensure that our NIHR CRN Portfolio of studies are appropriately supported and successfully delivered.

Over the past seven years an average of 15,500 participants were recruited to ophthalmology research studies per year. We constitute a cohesive group with established clinical research centres throughout UK and internationally renowned opinion leaders amongst our midst. The NIHR Ophthalmology Specialty Group is composed of ophthalmologists and optometrists and co-opted members of eyecare charities. Our members represent each of the 15 regions of the CRN in addition to nominated leads for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The group also have academic links, international links and an industry strategy. We cover the full range of subspecialties within Ophthalmology with internationally recognised strengths in the areas of Retina, Glaucoma, Uveitis and Genetics. Our portfolio covers academic and industry sponsored studies as well as MedTech research. Since 2017/18 we have had a dedicated Trials Manager to coordinate with overseas sponsors of large international multicentre studies in facilitating set up with networks of UK hospital sites. The support we provide includes:



### Leadership

A high proportion of our membership is comprised of nationally and internationally recognised key opinion leaders, many of whom are Principal Investigators for studies and have also acted as Chief Investigators, and we also have a national Industry Lead for commercial studies (30% of our studies) who provides strategic direction.

### Collaboration

We hold training workshops and symposia to improve knowledge of CRN activities in the UK workforce, and many of our regional leads conduct 'NIHR Roadshows' in their regions. We also collaborate closely with the following non-governmental organisations: Macula Society, RNIB, Fight for Sight; and professional organisations: Royal College of Ophthalmologists (RCOphth) and The College of Optometrists and in doing so we support NIHR research delivery in the UK through Research Awards, Trainee Research Networks, and Masterclasses.

We have implemented an annual symposium at the Annual RCOphth Congress with the specific role of engagement and portfolio development with industry sponsors.

We have several extremely successful networks in the fields of Retina and Glaucoma with UK wide studies ongoing. We have established a network of Principal Investigators with the knowledge, resources and infrastructure to permit participation in early phase studies. Additionally, we have established a national network of ophthalmic reading centres. We have established links with key Contract Research Organisations.

### Access to patients

Ophthalmology has been at the forefront in instituting Electronic Medical Records systems for data collection and this has facilitated the identification of eligible patient populations. We have established links with patient organisations that provide access to difficult to reach patient groups. Working with optometrist colleagues in the community we are able to recruit patients from both primary and secondary care settings. Participation in NIHR Ophthalmology studies is very high: in 2017/2018, 86 of 113 hospitals with acute eye care services in England (76 per cent) were recruiting into at least one NIHR portfolio Ophthalmology study, which had increased from 2016/2017 (69 per cent) and 2015/16 (57 per cent).

## Performance of Ophthalmology studies

The Ophthalmology Specialty Group supports the delivery of our studies to time and target. We actively manage study performance through direct involvement of the National Specialty Lead, specific members of the group and the NIHR CRN Industry team. The Ophthalmology Specialty recruited over 16,000 participants into studies in 2017/18. It also saw an increase in the number of studies open to recruitment. We facilitate discussions with sponsors, providing early feedback and suggesting strategies for site selection and improved recruitment. We also contribute to the national services including early feedback, site intelligence and site identification. The Ophthalmology specialty has achieved several global first patient recruited milestones and European firsts over the years.

## Case studies

### **LUMINOUS: Observing the effectiveness and safety of Ranubizumab in a real life setting**

CRN Ophthalmology supported LUMINOUS a long term real-world examination of the safety and effectiveness of Lucentis used for a variety of retinal problems. Approximately 30,000 patients were recruited from 49 sites demonstrating the Specialty can recruit from a wide range of sites across the UK.

### **EAGLE: Lens extraction versus standard iridotomy for angle closure glaucoma**

A multi-centre international effectiveness trial that tested an early intervention (lens extraction) for angle closure glaucoma (a condition that blinds 4 million people worldwide). EAGLE found that this early intervention opens up the eye's natural drainage channels more effectively, without any serious safety issues, and patients are happier because their vision improves and most do not need to use glaucoma eye drops. The EAGLE trial provides compelling evidence to support a change in current practice and results were published in *The Lancet* in 2016.

#### Find out more

You can visit our website at: [www.nihr.ac.uk/ophthalmology](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/ophthalmology) or email us at [crnophthalmology@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:crnophthalmology@nihr.ac.uk)

#### Contact us

If you are seeking support for a study you can review all of your support options and complete your study submission online at: [www.supportmystudy.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.supportmystudy.nihr.ac.uk)

We have also set up an Industry Information Centre, so if you have any questions about your study submission you can get in touch:

Phone: 00 44 113 34 34 555

Email: [supportmystudy@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:supportmystudy@nihr.ac.uk)

### **LEAVO: comparing the clinical and cost effectiveness of intravitreal therapy with ranibizumab (Lucentis) vs aflibercept (Eylea) vs bevacizumab (Avastin) for Macular Oedema due to Central Retinal Vein Occlusion**

The study is the largest study by site to date in UK Ophthalmology and has enrolled 463 patients at 44 sites across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland over 2 years. Sponsored by Moorfields Eye Hospital, the study results will play a key role in determining the delivery of patient care for macular oedema due to central retinal vein occlusion in the UK over the next 5 to 10 years.

### **SOMNUS sleep and ocular disease study**

The multi-centre study has been active for over seven years and successfully met its recruitment target of 3200 in 2018. Funded by a Wellcome grant, this is the first study to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of eye diseases on sleep and circadian rhythms in collaboration with 11 sites across the Thames Valley, South coast, London and Wales. Without funding from the CRN this study would not have recruited so effectively.

### **Gene therapy trial for Choroideremia**

An international Phase 3 clinical trial of the choroideremia gene therapy, sponsored by Nightstar Therapeutics, was launched in early 2018 on the back of the success of the Phase 1 study, and the first patients have been enrolled and treated at the Oxford Eye Hospital. This follows the successful launch there in early 2017 of a first-in-man clinical trial of a gene therapy for X-linked retinitis pigmentosa. Funding from the CRN has been important in delivering these trials.

### **United Kingdom Inherited Retinal Degeneration Consortium**

This UK consortium was established with funding from the Retinal Action (formerly UK RP-Fighting Blindness) and Fight for Sight to find new genes in inherited retinal degeneration, solve difficult cases, create a working partnership between the main centres working in inherited retinal degeneration; and to create a database to encourage sharing of data among other aims. It has led to a number of novel gene discoveries, 21 publications so far, and development of significant combined bioinformatic expertise, and further collaborations internationally. The four centres Leeds, Manchester, Moorfields, and Oxford were recently joined by 4 other centres including Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff and Glasgow. This UK wide project is a real example of the power of working collaboratively. Support from the CRN-NIHR has been key in continuing recruitment to this important study.

### **Further information**

The Ophthalmology Specialty Group has dedicated webpages (for professionals, patients, patient groups) accessible via the 'Research Hub' of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists' website: <https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/professional-resources/research-hub/the-nihr-ophthalmology-clinical-research-network/>