

Hearing and balance clinical trials network (HEARING CTN)

BY IAIN BRUCE AND KEVIN GREEN

About the HEARING CTN

The HEARING CTN is a new UK research network focused on promoting research collaboration and supporting high quality research studies, with the aim of improving the evidence supporting the diagnosis and management of hearing loss and balance disorders.

Why do we need the HEARING CTN?

A significant proportion of routine otological and practice is not supported by a strong evidence base, leading to clinical uncertainty regarding best-practice and variation in practice between centres. Collaboration between centres provides the ENT community in the UK with the potential to recruit the necessary numbers of patients to conduct high quality research that will directly influence patient care.

How does the HEARING CTN fit with other national bodies?

The HEARING CTN has strong links to the NIHR ENT Specialty Group which supports studies that are on the NIHR Portfolio. The HEARING CTN aims to support studies in order that they can become eligible for Portfolio inclusion and pilot studies that aim to lead to Portfolio-eligible studies.

The aims of the HEARING CTN and NIHR ENT Specialty Group are broadly similar (to increase the number of high quality studies in ENT in the UK with the aim to improve the evidence base for the specialty) but the HEARING CTN provides support at an earlier stage in the process.

Distinct from the NIHR ENT Specialty Group, the HEARING CTN will also support basic science research that does not have a clearly defined pathway to patient care.

What is the role of the HEARING CTN?

- Distribute an on-line database detailing the hearing and balance trials currently recruiting in the UK, increasing awareness and facilitating enrolment of new centres.
- Researchers will be given the opportunity to advertise summaries of new studies through the website, either in written form or via video.
- Provide an opportunity for researchers to publicise clinical trials prior to grant submission and obtain the necessary agreements, or commitments, from potential recruiting centres to strengthen grant applications.
- Provide a peer-review from senior researchers prior to grant applications.

The HEARING CTN is supported by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the NIHR ENT Specialty Group.

Will the HEARING CTN fund my trial?

The HEARING CTN is not itself a grant awarding body, but can provide access to the Surgical Trials Units which should help improve study methodology. It will support recruitment of centres to clinical studies thereby strengthening grant applications.

Who can access the HEARING CTN?

Any ENT surgeon, at any level of training or experience, who is committed to developing their research proposal in the field of hearing or balance.

Please note the HEARING CTN will not generate ideas for novel research projects for ENT surgeons interested in research. It will, however, provide feedback, advice and support to ENT surgeons, of any grade, who wish to develop their research proposal towards a grant application.

The initiative will be formally launched in 2015.



Prof Iain Bruce,

Consultant Paediatric Otolaryngologist,
Royal Manchester Children's Hospital,
Honorary Clinical Professor of Paediatric Otolaryngology MAHSC,
University of Manchester
E: iaain.bruce@cmft.nhs.uk

Declaration of Competing Interests
None declared



Mr Kevin Green,

Consultant Otolaryngologist and Implantation Otolologist,
Manchester Royal Infirmary
E: Kevin.green@cmft.nhs.uk

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