



SPCRN Annual Report 2007-08





Executive Summary

Scottish Practices and Professionals Involved in Research (SPPIRe) was established in 2002 as a framework to co-ordinate national research activity in primary care. The framework is funded by the Chief Scientist Office, centrally managed by the Scottish School of Primary Care (SSPC) and operationally managed at a regional level by the four nodes based in the North, East, South East and West of Scotland

In early 2007 a consortium of 9 Higher Education Institutions responded to a call from the Scottish Funding Council to move the management of SSPC from NHS Education Scotland to the University Sector. The School is currently managed from offices in the Division of Community Health Sciences in the University of Dundee and the Director is Professor Frank Sullivan.

From the first of May 2007, SPPIRe became known as the Scottish Primary Care Research Network (SPCRN). This change was made as "SPCRN" more adequately describes what the network does, and is also more easily associated as a partner organisation of the PCRNe, and the Topic Specific Research Networks around the UK.

During SPCRN's fifth year of live operation, it has made steady progress as a key resource, facilitating high quality studies of relevance to primary care. SPCRN has also embraced the opportunities presented by the UK Clinical Research Network (UKCRN) by working together with PCRN-e, as well as the Topic Specific Research Networks.

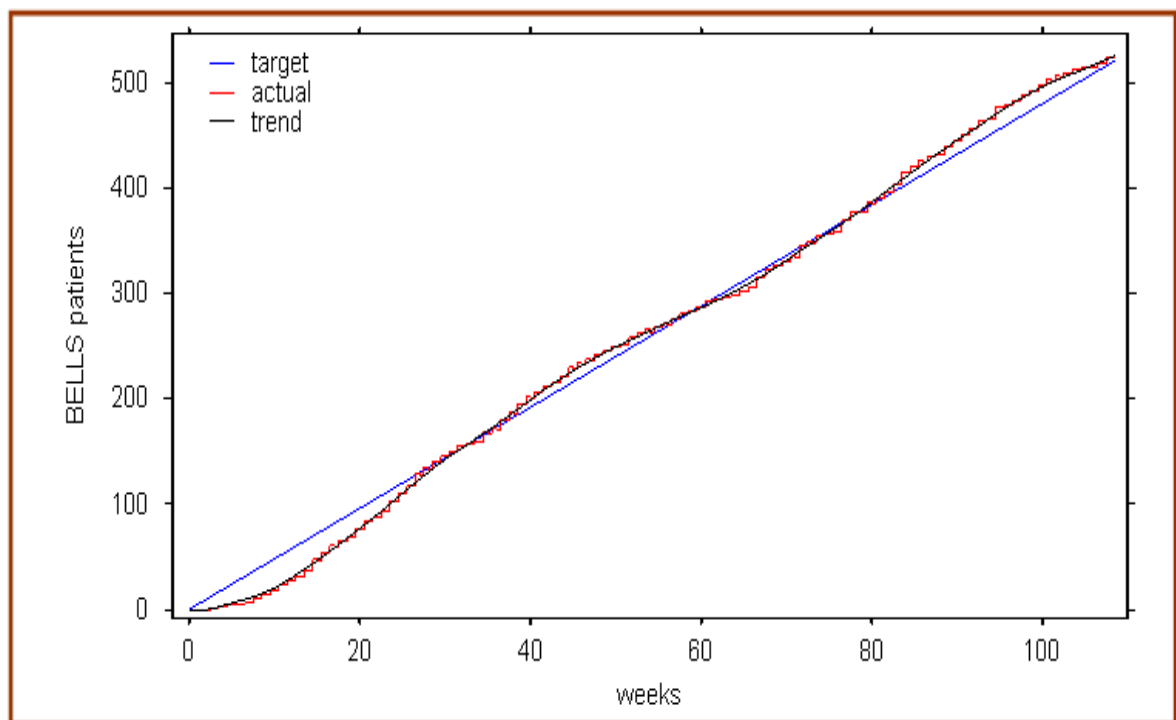
From 2007-2008 the SPCRN portfolio comprised sixty-six high quality studies of relevance to primary care. Of these, fifty-two studies recruited through SPCRN between April 2007 and end March 2008 and the remaining fourteen were about to start recruiting from April 2008. Twenty-four new studies were added to the portfolio during 2007-08 (exceeding our objective of twenty studies this year) and twelve recruited from more than one SPCRN node. Six of the national studies were added to the portfolio during 2007-2008, matching our objective for this year. Of the local studies, nine of these were undertaken in the north node, 8 in South East, 15 in West and 20 in the East node.

The Scottish Bell's Palsy Study (SBPS) was a randomized clinical trial funded by the Health Technology Assessment programme to ascertain the cost-effectiveness of early treatment of Bell's palsy with acyclovir (an antiviral drug) (with or without steroids) versus natural resolution.



SBPS was the first study recruiting GPs from all NHS Board areas in Scotland to be facilitated by SPCRN and presented a number of challenges. SBPS ran throughout Scotland from November 2003 to June 2007 with patient recruitment from June 2004 to June 2006 (25 months). SPCRN were involved in the study from the pre-funding stage onwards and assisted the research team in obtaining funding and successfully prosecuting the study.

Recruitment to Bell's Palsy Study



McKinstry B, Hammersley V, Daly F, Sullivan F Recruitment and retention in a multicentre randomised controlled trial in Bells palsy: A case study. BMC Medical Research Methodology 2007, 7:15 doi:10.1186/1471-2288-7-15

SPCRN has been approached with a view to mounting a large commercial study to be delivered nationwide. Discussions between the sponsor and Scottish partners are ongoing, but it is envisaged that patient recruitment will be through GP practices and the first approach, delivery of the intervention, follow up and tracking and remuneration to practices will be managed through SPCRN. This is a large project and arises specifically from our proven ability to provide the infrastructure necessary to support such an undertaking. To date, SPCRN has managed focus groups and other preparatory activity to inform the planning of workload, schedules and budgets.

SPCRN collaborations with some of the Topic Specific Research Networks in Scotland include joint work with both the Scottish Diabetes Research Network on identifying diabetic patients in primary care for a diabetes research register and the Stroke Research Network on the “DNA resource for lacunar (small vessel disease) stroke” study in the North node. A commercial project which will involve collaboration between SPCRN and the Medicines for Children Research Network is currently being finalised.

A new system for reimbursement of service support costs for GPs participating in research projects through SPCRN has recently been agreed with CSO and the R&D community. The key elements of this centralised system are the funds held by SPCRN (through the University of Dundee) to meet the approved service support costs of GP research and a uniform costing framework across Scotland.

Objectives for SPCRN in 2008-09 include:

- increasing the number of national and local projects recruiting through the network
- increasing the number of practices and professionals involved in SPCRN studies
- facilitation of commercial studies
- continuing to develop strong links with PCRNe and the other Topic Specific Research Networks in Scotland.

SPCRN core staff:

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