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Foreward

Our last newsletter was in the Autumn of 2019, before any of us had heard of covid-19, which now seems a very long time ago. First of all, on behalf of all of us in SSPC, I'd like to express our deepest sympathy to those of you who have lost loved ones during the pandemic, and our heart-felt thanks and appreciation to all NHS and social care colleagues who continue to provide first-class technical care as well as boundless compassion in this time of national crisis. We must all do everything we can to support them now, and in the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the effort of all academic colleagues, across all disciplines, who have worked tirelessly in researching the effects of this previously unknown virus and rapidly producing and rigorously testing innovative interventions and solutions. The production of new vaccines in record time is only one example of what can be achieved when scientists work together across boundaries and borders.

SSPC members have been actively involved in the response to the pandemic, and in this edition we highlight some of these collaborative activities across the school. As I mentioned in our last newsletter we are delighted that three additional Universities have joined the school – Strathclyde, RGU, and the University of the Highlands and Islands. With the Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Unit at Stirling University and the five Scottish medical schools, our membership now fully reflects the multidisciplinary world of primary care and the geographically dispersed population of Scotland.

There has never been a more important time for a strong primary care system in Scotland, and the need for this to be underpinned by a vibrant academic primary care community.

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Foreward con't

In this issue, Professor Frank Sullivan gives us an update on his work to raise the profile of academic primary care in Scotland, and Professor John Gillies updates us on the implementation of his report to Scottish Government on increasing undergraduate teaching in primary care.

After 6 years as Director of the school, I decided last year that it was time for me to step down. It gives me great pleasure to introduce the new Co-Directors of SSPC - Professor Lindsay Pope and Professor Gill Hubbard – who introduce themselves in this edition and explain their vision for the future of the school going forward.

Serving as Director of the SSPC has been an enormous privilege, and I am grateful to so many people for their support, advice, and enthusiasm. There are too many names to mention them all, but a special thanks to John Gillies, Deputy Director of the school from 2016-2020, Dr Bridie Fitzpatrick who was our Programme Manager, Dr Rhian Noble-Jones who was lead core-team researcher during the national evaluation of new models of care, and Karen Penman our invaluable Administrator. I'd also like to thank the Executive Management Group, and the Advisory Group for their wise counsel. A special thanks to Dr Gregor Smith, who as Deputy Chief Medical Officer and more recently as Chief Medical Officer has been a stalwart supporter of the school and its ambitions, and to Sir Lewis Ritchie who has played a pivotal role in promoting and supporting primary care in Scotland over many decades. Finally, I am grateful to the Scottish Government for the substantive funding that enabled the national evaluation of new models of care, and their ongoing funding of the core-costs of the school. The new Co-Directors will no doubt seek to supplement this core funding with additional funding to enable SSPC to flourish and deliver our vision for sustainable and equitable high quality primary care that meets the needs of the people of Scotland. May the school, and the purpose it serves, go from strength to strength.



Professor Stewart Mercer
SSPC Director

Legislation to re-enable St Andrews to confer medical degrees.

The Scottish Parliament (10 March 2021) unanimously (122 for and none against) passed the *University of St Andrews (Degrees in Medicine and Dentistry) Bill*, which brings St Andrews in line with the other medical schools in Scotland, and allows the University to award the ScotGEM Primary Medical Qualification jointly with the University of Dundee. The school has developed a new, more clinical, strategy <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/medicine/about/school-strategy/> and will appoint an additional chair of General practice in 2022.

The World Rural Health Conference 2022 ("Rural Wonca") will be hosted jointly by the University of Limerick, Irish College of General Practice and the Irish Rural, Island and Dispensing Doctors of Ireland from 17th-20th June 2022. Dr. Robert Scully (Deputy Director, ScotGEM), has been invited to join the main organising committee, with responsibility for students and early career healthcare professionals. He has been joined on the student sub-committee by ScotGEM Y3 student Ronald MacDonald. This is the premier global rural health conference, and is expected to attract over 1000 delegates.

Having supported the initial bid, ScotGEM are official partners for this conference, and as it commences the day after the first ScotGEM graduation, it is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the graduating Charter ScotGEM class. As part of this celebration, Professor Roger Strasser (St Andrews Global Fellowship recipient 21/22) will attend the ScotGEM graduation and then travel to Limerick to deliver a keynote address regarding the role of undergraduate medical education on future healthcare delivery in rural areas.

Rebecca Walmsley, Rob Scully, Frank Sullivan



Primary care healthcare professionals research priorities in Scotland after the coronavirus pandemic

An SSPC project

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on primary care and so it is timely to set primary care research priorities to support recovery. The aim of the project that was conducted in 2020, was to reach a consensus for primary care research priorities in Scotland and set a research direction that will be relevant for patients, carers and primary healthcare professionals in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

Methods

Anyone living in Scotland and a healthcare professional in primary care in Scotland was eligible to participate in the online survey. Participants recommended up to three suggestions for primary care research. These suggestions were grouped into themes and sub-themes by the research team. Respondents ranked these themes and sub-themes in order of priority.

Results

There were 512 respondents; 92.2% (n=470) worked in health and/or social care with most working in primary care. Thirty-three percent (n=157) of respondents were in nursing and midwifery professions 25% (n=120) in Allied Health Professions and 20% (n=95) in medical professions. The total number of research suggestions was 1,274. Research suggestions were categorised under 12 main themes and 30 sub-themes. Five themes had over 100 suggestions for research; these were 'disease and illness', 'access', 'workforce', 'multidisciplinary teams' and 'integration'.

One hundred and three (20%) respondents to the survey participated in ranking the list of 12 themes in order of research priority. The five most highly ranked themes were as follows: 19.4% of respondents chose 'disease and illness', 17.4% chose 'health inequalities', 14.5% chose 'access', 12.6% chose 'workforce' and 12.6% chose 'multi-disciplinary team' as their number one top research priority. Hence, based on this ranking exercise, these are the top five priorities for research.

Top five ranked research priorities

1. Disease and illness
2. Health inequalities
3. Access
4. Workforce
5. Multi-disciplinary teams

Discussion and conclusion

This is the first comprehensive project to assess research priorities in primary care since the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. The findings of this research prioritisation exercise can inform the future direction of research in primary care in Scotland. The themes and sub-themes identified in this project could be prioritised by research funders.

New major grant funding for evaluation or primary care transformation in Scotland

Stewart Mercer and colleagues have gained funding of over £1 million pounds from the Economic and Social Research Council to evaluate primary care transformation in Scotland over the coming 3 years. This will be a mixed—methods study which will include analysis of national data, routine electronic medical records, and qualitative interviews with patients, primary care staff, and policymakers. The analysis will particularly focus on health inequalities.

The Scottish School of Primary Care new members

RGU

RGU are delighted to be member of the SSPC Board and make contributions to the developments in multi-professional working in primary Care in Scotland. Scott Cunningham, Professor of Pharmacy Education and Practice represents RGU and commented that 'We look forward to working with colleagues from other professions across Scotland through the SSPC to help develop primary care services for patients. This is a challenging but very exciting time for healthcare with so many opportunities for multi-professional working. RGU has a track record and expertise in IPE and the development of the role of the non-medical prescriber - we look forward to building on this with the SSPC.' RGU School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences already works closely with Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, Uni. Of Strathclyde and NHS Education for Scotland.

UHI

The university of the Highlands and Islands Department of Nursing and Midwifery has a campus in Stornoway, Western Isles and Inverness on the mainland. The department runs an undergraduate programme and has a unique post-qualifying midwifery programme for nurses who wish to re-train as midwives. Postgraduate programmes ensure that the workforce in the Highlands and Islands can access locally provided Continuing Professional Development, including non-medical prescribing. Research aligns with the needs of the local population and as such, there is a focus on digital health technology because it is one of the ways of supporting geographically dispersed and remote populations. Professor Gill Hubbard who is representing UHI on the SSPC Executive and of the new directors of SSPC said, 'I am delighted that UHI is a member of SSPC. We are the most northern and rural university in Scotland with strong partnerships with our regional NHS Boards. As a member of SSPC, UHI can help ensure that Scotland's multi-professional health and social care workforce, wherever they are located, have access to the highest quality education and research.'

University of Strathclyde

Marion Bennie from the University of Strathclyde has stated that 'As the University of Strathclyde representative the SSPC Executive Group has provided a helpful senior multidisciplinary forum to discuss evolving clinical care pathways and the expanding complimentary workforce roles in primary care within the context of evidence generation and postgraduate education.

Introducing the new SSPC Co-Directors

After a 6 year stint as director of SSPC, Prof Stewart Mercer has handed over to Profs Lindsey Pope and Gill Hubbard who are the new co-directors of SSPC. Their joint appointment reflects the strategic direction of the school, with a strong focus on multi-professional education and research.



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I am currently Professor of Health Services Research in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Highlands and Islands. I am an Associate Editor of BMC Pilot and Feasibility Studies and have a special research interest in behavioural change interventions for managing chronic illness.

When Sally Wyke was the director of SSPC in 2002, I was employed as a senior research fellow in the Department of General Practice and Primary Care, University of Glasgow to work on SSPC projects with Jill Morrison. I am therefore delighted to be taking on a co-director role for SSPC in 2021.



Lindsey Pope, GP & Professor of Medical Education, University of Glasgow.

Lindsey is the Director of Community Based Medical Education and Director of Professionalism at the Undergraduate Medical School and is a GMC Education Associate with involvement in regional and school reviews, new school approvals and most recently as a Team Leader for the CPSA component of the new national MLA (Medical Licensing Assessment).

ARCRC Centre

The Advanced Care Research Centre (ACRC) is a new multi-disciplinary research programme within the University of Edinburgh seeking to deliver innovation and change to the care of people in later life. Funded with a £20 million investment from Legal and General, the ACRC comprises research and development, combined with the ACRC Academy, which is a cohort-based PhD programme aiming to develop leaders of the future. Bruce Guthrie is the Director of the ACRC, and Stewart Mercer is the lead for the new models of care work-stream, sits on the core management team, and is a Deputy Director of the ACRC Academy.

The ACRC Director is Bruce Guthrie, Professor of General Practice at the University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute and the Programme Manager is Lucy McCloughan. For further information, visit our website www.edin.care or contact the Programme Manager Lucy

Delivering on the recommendations of the Gillies report

This report, *Undergraduate medical education in Scotland: enabling more general practice based teaching* was published in October 2019 and endorsed by the Board for Academic Medicine and by Ms Jeanne Freeman MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health. <https://www.gov.scot/news/growing-the-next-generation-of-gps/>

One of the recommendations was an increase in the tariff for teaching students, and in April 2020, the category A tariff for hosting a medical student in general practice was raised from £40 to £85 per session. Of course, throughout 2020, COVID-19 has imposed huge extra clinical burdens on practices which has impacted, in places, on their capacity to teach.

COVID-19 also delayed the start of the Delivery Group for all ten recommendations (pages 3 and 4 of the report) so I was delighted when in September, Scottish Government Primary Care Division asked me to chair the Delivery Group. It is supported by David McCaig, Head of GP Sustainability in the division. I am pleased to report that Scottish Government are fully committed to delivering on all of the recommendations. It is a field of some complexity, and increasing undergraduate education in general practice will also require action from medical schools, NHS Education Scotland, and Health Boards. The final recommendation of the report is on evaluation of the changes and their effects on career intentions, attitudes and decisions by medical students and new doctors. We would expect and hope for a positive trend towards general practice as a career choice, but we need to ensure that we collect the evidence over the next few years to assess progress in this direction. I hope that it will be possible for SSPC to be fully involved in this process.

UPDATE

The Delivery Group for the recommendations of the Increasing 'Undergraduate Education in Primary Care' group continues to meet. Results of a survey measuring UG education in general practice in each Scottish medical school this autumn will be discussed at the Board for Academic Medicine in December. group on a simplified tariff for Category B educational activities by GPs.

The changes in practice due to COVID have brought about innovations but have obviously constrained progress in other ways. The increased workload in general practice at the moment is also having an effect on their capacity to teach UG students. Work continues by the NES ACT group on a simplified tariff for Category B educational activities by GPs.

Working Lives of GPs—SSPC 2018 Survey update

SSPC conducted a national survey of GPs working lives in 2018, which was led by Stewart Mercer, John Gillies and Bridie Fitzpatrick. The survey had an excellent response rate of 56%. The findings were presented at the last SSPC conference, and reported in our last newsletter (http://www.sspc.ac.uk/media/Media_670277_smxx.pdf)

Two papers have now been published from this survey; Mercer SW, Gillies J, Fitzpatrick B. Progress of GP Clusters two years after their introduction in Scotland: findings from the Scottish School of Primary Care National GP Survey. *BJGP Open* 2020, Nov 3:bjgpopen20X101112. doi: 10.3399/bjgpopen20X101112. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 33144368.

Hayes H, Gibson J, Fitzpatrick B, Checkland K, Guthrie B, Sutton M, Gillies J, Mercer SW. Working lives of GPs in Scotland and England: cross-sectional analysis of national surveys. *BMJ Open* 2020;10:e042236. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2020-042236

Briefing Papers

Five new briefing papers for GP clusters have been published over the past few months and the majority of those already listed have been updated in the past 12 months.

Remote and rural General Practice in Scotland by John Gillies explores some of the distinctive features of these practices and gives examples of the day to day practice of GPs working in remote and rural practices at a time of considerable change and challenge.

Learning from GPs at the Deep End by David Blane and Graham Watt seeks to demonstrate the potential wider benefits of key elements of Deep End initiatives.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners by Heather Strachan and Gaylor Hoskins summarises the findings of the ANP case study funded by the Scottish Government to evaluate new models of primary care.

Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy by Barbara Nicholl and Colleagues summarises the findings of the MSK case study funded by the Scottish Government to evaluate new models of primary care.

Evaluation of Primary Care by Stewart Mercer and colleagues is the key findings of the independent evaluation of the new models of primary care being tested during 2016—2018 commissioned by the Scottish Government.

2021 NES GP Fellowships & other fellowships

This month, Dr Barbara Farquharson embarked upon her 3-year Career Development Fellowship, funded by the British Heart Foundation. Only recently introduced, these prestigious fellowships offer a rare opportunity for nurses or allied health professionals to develop as research leaders. Working with Prof Marie Johnston (University of Aberdeen) and Dr Gareth Clegg (University of Edinburgh/Scottish Ambulance Service) Barbara will investigate the critical role of ambulance call-handlers in encouraging people to perform cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

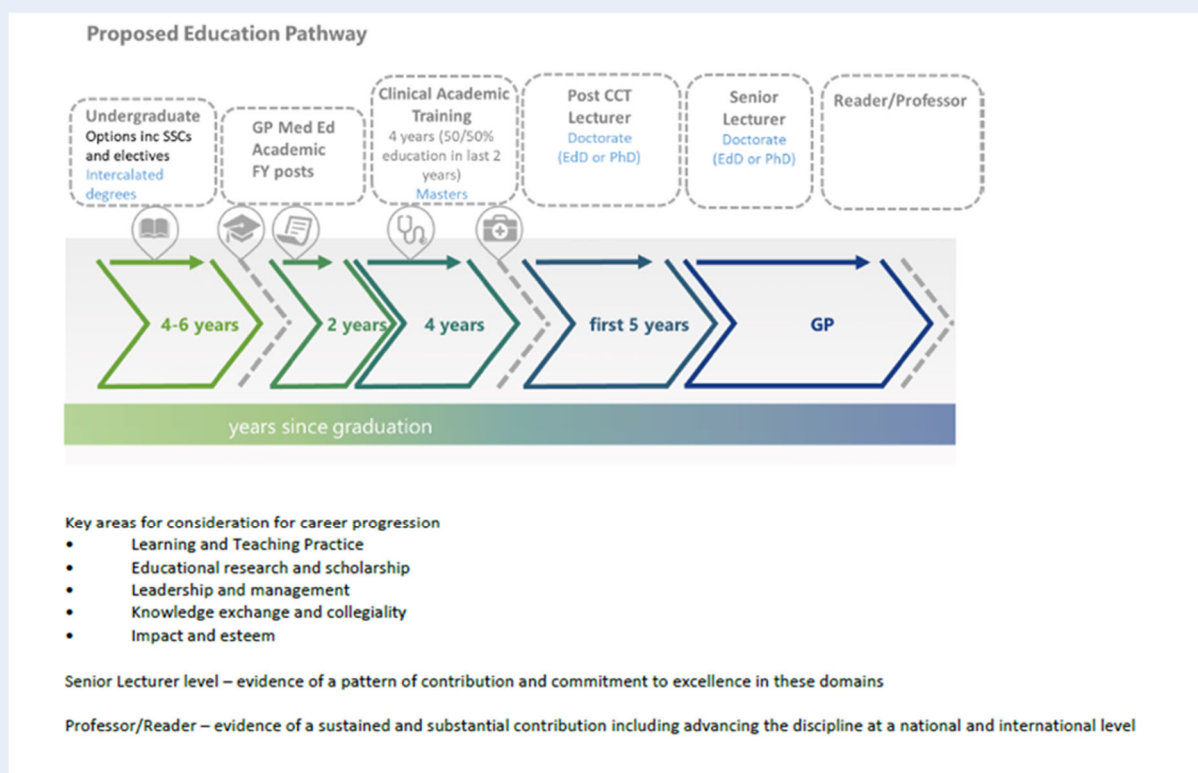
In other Fellowship news, there is now a career development opportunity for senior/experienced pharmacists committed to working in, or providing services to, NHS Scotland to become the first Scottish Pharmacist Clinical Academic Fellows (SPCAFs). This opportunity is designed to strengthen future pharmacy research. Clinical Academic Pharmacist fellowships in Scotland are designed to support the Pharmacy Postgraduate Career Framework review published in 2020. These posts will provide the opportunity to develop research skills applied to a defined clinical area through completion of a research project. More details can be found [here](#)

This year the NES GP Academic Fellowships went ahead after a pause last year due to Covid. These posts offer unique opportunities in training in academic aspects of general practice, and are ideal for GPs at an early stage of career development contemplating an academic career. The posts were awarded to a number of successful candidates across the Scottish institutions.

Update on Board for Academic Medicine (BfAM) report on Academic GP careers

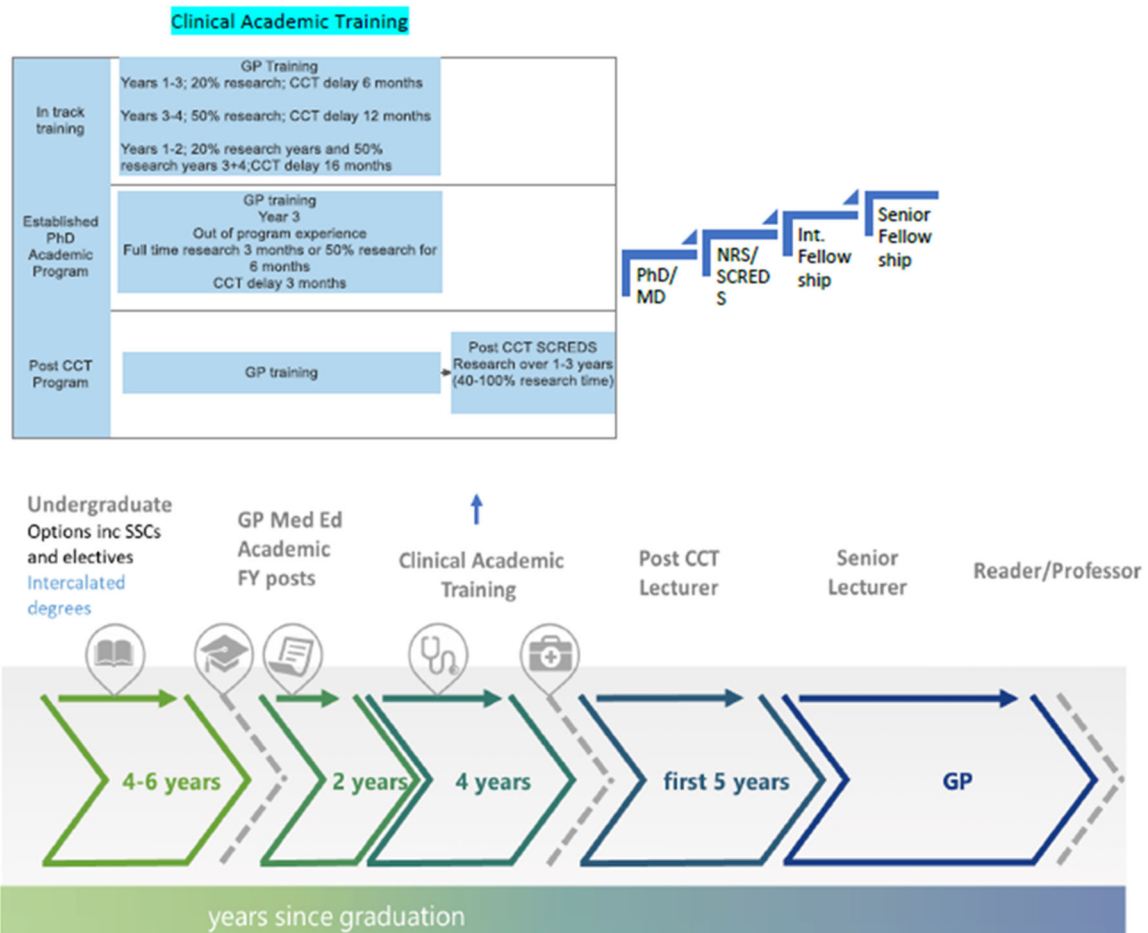
Implementation of the BfAM report on GP academic careers <http://www.sspc.ac.uk/reports/> has carried on under the leadership of Prof. Adam Hill in NES. Progress has been complicated by a review of all SCREDS programmes [https://www.scotmt.scot.nhs.uk/specialty/scottish-academic-training-\(screds\).aspx](https://www.scotmt.scot.nhs.uk/specialty/scottish-academic-training-(screds).aspx) in Scotland, also led by Prof. Hill. The other major development, highlighted by Frances elsewhere in the newsletter is the availability of 34 clinical PhDs in a doctoral training starting over the next 5 years in multimorbidity <https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/mvls/graduateschool/multimorbidity/>. Although this is open to all health professions we anticipate that a number of successful applicants will be GPs in training and within the 1st 3 years of completing their CCT.

The 1st recommendation of the final report was: The Scottish School of Primary Care (SSPC) is well placed to advocate and co-ordinate evaluation of the implementation process and provide annual reports to BfAM. The SSPC executive is considering how that may be achieved.



Dr Luke Daines, University of Edinburgh, Professor Bruce Guthrie, University of Edinburgh, Professor Amjad Khan, NHS Education for Scotland, Dr. Sarah Mills, University of Dundee, Professor Lindsey Pope, University of Glasgow, Dr. Johanna Reilly, University of Edinburgh, Professor Frank Sullivan, University of St. Andrews, Professor Valerie Wass, University of Aberdeen

Proposed Research Pathway



Congratulations

Many congratulations to Bhautesh Jani and Frances Mair who have taken over from Bruce Guthrie as Co-leads for the NRS Primary Care Network (the national network for research in primary care in Scotland). Information on the network can be found here; <https://www.nhsresearchscotland.org.uk/research-areas/primary-care>

SSPC Covid-19 Research

The following link outlines the Covid-19 research carried out by SSPC members to date.
<http://www.sspc.ac.uk/research/>

Wellcome PhD Multimorbidity Programme

We are pleased to share the good news that Wellcome have awarded £8.5M to support a new Multimorbidity PhD Programme for Health Professionals (https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline_816021_en.html) in Scotland.

This is the first Multimorbidity PhD Programme for health professionals in the world. The new PhD programme is led by Professor Frances Mair at the University of Glasgow in collaboration with Professor Bruce Guthrie at the University of Edinburgh, Professor Colin McCowan at the University of St Andrews and Professor Ewan Pearson at the University of Dundee. The programme aims to create a generation of innovative, world-leading researchers empowered with expertise in multimorbidity to prevent the condition and better treat those who are already affected by multimorbidity. The programme is open to: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, clinical psychologists and allied health professionals.

Further details are available here: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/mvls/graduateschool/multimorbidity/>. We expect to offer 34 fellowships over the next 5 years across the participating institutions, with the first intake starting in 2022. The fellowships will be advertised in the near future. The programme will help catalyse development of an urgently needed critical mass of multimorbidity researchers for whom interdisciplinary and integrated thinking is the norm.