
Europe's Medical Research Councils Call for a Closer Link Between Doctors, Researchers and Patients

Adding research-centred approaches into the day-to-day life of the doctor's clinic strengthens clinical decisions, according to a new report by the European Medical Research Councils. The "Implementation of Medical Research in Clinical Practice" report launches May 11, 2011 at the European School of Management and Technology in Berlin, Germany.

The report examines the quality of clinical research, and how using research in clinical practice can improve treatment. An important theme is tightening the relationship between doctors, patients and researchers, such as involving GPs in clinical trials to get a better idea of how treatments work in a wider range of patients, beyond the controlled environment of a hospital. "Medical care has improved greatly in the last 50 years, underpinned by progress in clinical research," said Professor Liselotte Højgaard, chair of the European Medical Research Councils, part of the European Science Foundation (ESF). "But we cannot be complacent. We want new findings to be introduced into clinical practice as speedily and efficiently as possible, so that evidence-based medicine is used in each and every patient treatment."

There is scope to involve patients more in defining the most important research questions, to ensure patient-oriented research is most relevant for end-users. Patients could also benefit from more information about new treatments' evaluations in terms of effectiveness and cost, and ensuring the added value of a new treatments is demonstrated before approval. Clinical and toxicological information about medicines could also be made more readily available. Prof Højgaard continues: "There is a big difference between use of knowledge and its creation. Generating a new idea, testing it through research and bringing it to clinical practice is complex, and how it is organised varies hugely from country to country."

Greater international collaboration between countries could help with systematically reviewing treatments, through shared databases on protocols, data, and health technology assessments. The report recommends actively using evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, as well as promoting rigorous reporting for clinical studies. Health technology assessment reports and clinical guidelines are strongly advised for hospitals and primary care facilities, as well as for administrative processes including financing of treatment and technologies. The report is a comprehensive analysis undertaken by 90 leading international experts. The European Medical Research Councils (EMRC) is the membership organisation for all the medical research councils in Europe, representing the medical research communities in 30 countries. Forward Looks are strategic foresight activities for Europe's scientific community and policy-makers to define research agendas at national and European levels.

The "Implementation of Medical Research in Clinical Practice" Forward Look is available online: www.esf.org/publications

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