

Thoughts following 2019's R&D Forum

Written by Rose Dewey.
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Rose Dewey is the Research Management Lead at West Yorkshire Research & Development.

I attended the R&D Forum recently in Brighton. This always presents a good opportunity to hear about different things going on across the NHS R&D community. The conference gets bigger every year with more attendees, more presentations and more posters.

The conference started with 3 sessions reminding us #whywedoresearch as speakers gave us the patient, policy maker and regulator perspectives on this important issue – essentially, why we are here and why it is important. Anyone who hasn't seen Tessa Jowell's impassioned speech to the House of Lords shortly before her untimely death should definitely seek it out.

Next up Louise Hall, Director of Science, Research and Evidence at DHSC talked about primary care being one of research's underserved areas and highlighted that the National Institute for Health Research is focusing on building capacity and capability in this area. Being our area of focus I found this really interesting and hope to see this lead to growth in primary care.

It was great to see a new version of the IRAS form which is under development and promises to improve the process of submitting research applications. Watch this space for news of this in the future. It will also help to bring the UK in line with updated EU clinical trials regulations - we plan to keep in line with what happens in the EU so that studies don't have to go through multiple different processes.

We had multiple presentations from R&D teams across the spectrum showing some of the things they are doing with their structures, with building the profile of research within their organisations and engaging with patients. I picked up some useful tips to consider for our team.

There were also presentations from NHSX and from an eye consultant, talking about the potential of artificial intelligence in healthcare. There has been a lot of work at NHSX looking at the use of evidence in this area. The industry is so fast-moving that we need to ensure that evaluation is fast-moving enough that it does not hold up developments, but also robust enough to ensure quality evidence supports those developments.

Next year's R&D Forum will be taking place in Gateshead - slightly closer to home for us!

Slides are available online: <https://www.annualrdforum.org.uk/rd19-full-programme/>