

Report on NIHR ARC South London 'Inside research' seminar

17 February 2021, 6.00 – 7.30pm



Background to the seminar series

In the ARC's funding application to the NIHR, we proposed that we would establish a 'thematic symposium series' across the ARC to ensure active collaboration between all themes by the end of the second year of the programme. ARC director Professor Sir Graham Thornicroft raised this proposal at the ARC Executive meeting in September 2020 and there was general agreement that these should take place and that they should be delivered to wider groups and audiences beyond the ARC South London. This should be an accessible seminar series rather than an academic symposium. A small working group was formed to develop and plan the seminar series.

Aims of the Inside Research seminar series

The working group (see below) proposed the following aims for the seminar series:

- Provide a space to exchange knowledge, experience, information, learning and ideas
- Encourage collaboration between themes, enabling researchers to present and discuss their work with researchers from other themes
- Provide a focus on challenges specific to south London
- Share methodological work, presenting its practical application
- Focus on the conditions of our review (eg social care and public health, to develop a wider understanding of issues across our ARC)
- Involve service users, patients, carers and members of the public in setting the agendas
- Provide an opportunity to involve our partner organisations and other stakeholders from local / national organisations and other ARCs
- Bring clinicians and academics together in the discussions.

Summary of the first Inside Research seminar on 17 February 2021

The theme of the first Inside Research seminar was: 'How NIHR ARC South London has worked with partner organisations to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic', with a focus on new maternity, palliative and social care services research. It was attended by more than 80 members of the public, health and social care practitioners, and researchers.

The event was chaired by Ray Chaudhuri, professor of movement disorders and neurology, King's College London, director of research and assistant medical director, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and ARC South London Board member. There were three presentations of recent ARC South London research followed by a Q&A session.

The three presentations were:

- **Remote maternity care during the pandemic** ([slides](#))

Sergio A. Silverio, research associate, King's College London, examined

how virtual and remote care has changed maternity care practices during the pandemic. It highlighted how women considered virtual postnatal care a better option than no postnatal care, but still would have preferred face-to-face care. It also highlighted that women felt birth partners being present during antenatal, labour, and postnatal care is essential to good quality care, and should not be removed in any future waves of the pandemic.

● **Ethnic minority groups and palliative care services during the pandemic** (slides)

Sabrina Bajwah, honorary consultant in palliative care, King's College Hospital and Hameed Khan, a public involvement representative in the ARC's palliative and end of life care theme, explored the response of specialist palliative and end of life care services to people from ethnic minority groups diagnosed with Covid-19. This presentation explored the disproportionate adverse impact of restricted visiting, language barriers, unmet religious and faith needs, and mistrust of services by ethnic minority groups during the first wave of the pandemic in relation to palliative care.

● **Helping day care services to re-open after lockdown** (slides)

Professor Jill Manthorpe, the ARC's social care theme lead, and Rekha Elaswarapu, patient and public involvement representative, discussed how ARC South London produced guidance to support day centre managers to plan for safely and confidently re-opening after the first lockdown.

"Social care and day care centres are really the hub of the community for many people, from young children, single parents, elderly people living on their own – their closure has really affected these people."

Rashmi Kumar, Covid-19 public research panel member

Summary of main discussion points

Dr Josephine Ocloo, diversity and inclusion lead, ARC South London, invited comments from three members of the ARC's Covid-19 public research panel, Agnes Agyepong, Clive Moore and Rashmi Kumar. Issues raised by the panel members included data poverty in virtual maternity care, how a 'one size fits all' approach to palliative care cannot work, and the vital role day care centres play in communities.

Other main points from the Q&A and discussions in the breakout rooms were:

Social care and day care centres

- There was agreement that the ARC 'tools' or guidance to unlock lockdown day centres after lockdown were useful and timely, and were more specific than other national guidance.
- People hoped that day centres will open again once the vaccination programme has been completed, as they provide vital services for many people who are unable to use other community resources.
- Many observed that their local day centres had not reopened despite being permitted to open, owing to staffing and other logistic problems or perceptions of problems. Day centres for homeless people were reported to have opened.
- Questions of funding were raised for centres that are voluntary or community run, as regular fundraising activities that keep them going had stopped. Fundraising may need to start again but help from local councils and NHS would be welcome.
- Many felt that returning to day centres will depend on what is on offer, and how centres that offer support to people who are very vulnerable to infection will have to continue to listen to national guidance.
- In the future day centres could make use of digital technology within the centres to improve peoples' experience (eg touchless screens) but they need to be situated alongside the need for groups that may not engage as well with technology. There could be a blended model where some face-to-face services are retained but some are virtual for people who cannot or prefer not to access buildings.

[Read the Health and Social Care workforce blog for further feedback.](#)

"How can we empower our health professionals to better engage with women and to build rapport in virtual settings?"

Agnes Agyepong, Covid-19 public research panel member



Maternity care – remote care during the pandemic

- Training is needed to empower healthcare professionals to engage with women better and build up a rapport, trust and relationships in a virtual setting.
- Care should be tailored to the individual. There is a need to strike a balance between virtual and face-to-face care depending on what women need and want. The study showed that many women preferred to have face-to-face care if it was a child healthcare check.
- Some health assessments cannot be done virtually and health professionals miss out on visual cues if they are not face to face. This is particularly important in relation to women experiencing domestic violence, where non-verbal clues are so important.
- Economic impact on women of using digital technology for virtual appointments – not everyone can afford it.
- Researchers need to be from a diverse background themselves to get a range of women involved in research.



Palliative and end of life care – addressing the needs of ethnic minority groups

- Many people are excluded from digital communication due to poverty, age or lack of experience, but these same people are often the major users of health and social care services so it is important that their needs are considered and addressed.
- Key issue identified was a lack of individualised care, and cultural perceptions particularly when people wanted to die at home rather than hospital. Better service provision in white middle-class areas than areas with higher Black, Asian and minority ethnic populations.
- Not enough focus on spiritual care or faith for patients and too much focus on clinical care – staff are taught the clinical side, but not the caring side in end of life care.
- Staff may not have enough understanding of different cultures and their needs related to end of life care. Culturally appropriate care is needed and flexibility in terms of policies related to areas such as the number of permitted visitors.
- Important that the potential impact of different policies and ways of working are assessed before they are implemented where possible.
- People experienced language barriers and access to testing was provided too late for people in Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Professor Chaudhuri ended the seminar by highlighting the importance of working together to reduce the negative impacts of Covid-19 on diverse communities in south London.

“We need to work with communities and religious leaders to see what can be done to smooth the path so that everyone can have a decent and respectful death.”

Clive Moore, Covid-19 public research panel member

Event feedback

Following the event, we gathered feedback on the seminar. We received 25 responses to an event survey and the overall feedback was very positive:

- 80% of people thought the event was 'good' or 'very good'
- 68% said it met their expectations.

Attendees enjoyed the opportunity to share experiences with a diverse mix of people from a variety of backgrounds. They also enjoyed the friendly interaction and breadth of topics covered. Suggestions for improvement included: longer times for Q&A and breakout rooms, fewer presentations, one presenter per topic, and equal time allowed for each speaker.

Find out more:

- [Watch a recording of the seminar](#) and [read the programme](#)

Thank you to the organising group:

Flavia Bertini	Rachel Louise Allen
Clare Coultas	Josephine Ocloo
Renee Grant-Ogunbiyi	Hannah Rayment-Jones
Michele Harris-Tafri	Nick Sarson
Andy Healey	Jane Stafford
Savitri Hensman	

Next seminar

The next seminar topic in the Inside Research series is:

How applied health research is supporting people with multiple long-term conditions and reducing health and care inequalities.

The seminar will be held in June 2021, dates TBC.

Find out more:

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- Follow us on Twitter: [@ARC_S_L](https://twitter.com/ARC_S_L)