



ENSURING VALUE IN RESEARCH

Ensuring Value in Research (EViR) Funders' Forum

Autumn Round Table Meeting Minutes

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Virtual meeting.

Welcome to the 13th EViR meeting

Michael Bowdery (HCRW) welcomed all members from 35 different organisations to the EViR Funders' Forum round table. An overview of the meeting agenda was presented and members were invited to come together at the networking session at the end of the day.

Day 1 was open to everyone from the broad EViR global community with an interest in the EViR agenda, regardless of the membership status of their organisation. Day 1 discussions fed into the Day 2 agenda.

Panel Session – Why EViR matters

Chair: Michael Bowdery (HCRW, UK)

Panel members: Each panel member provided their view on the value of the EViR membership, followed by a discussion. The panel consisted of the following:

- Barbara van der Linden (ZonMw, The Netherlands)
- Charlotte Coates (The Scar Free Foundation, UK)
- Staffan Arvidsson (Forte, Sweden)
- Dottie Goble (NIHR, UK)

Purpose of the session:

The panel members had the opportunity to introduce themselves and tell attendees about their association with EViR. They also shared their views on the following:

- How has being part of EViR made a difference to:
 - The way your organisation thinks about research funding.
 - Your PRACTICE as an organisation (e.g. can you give an example of a change you've made as a result of being part of EViR)
- In *your* role as a research funder, what has being part of EViR meant to you personally? (How has it helped you to do your job?)
- The pandemic has thrown a lot of assumptions about research funding practices up in the air and asked questions of us as funders. What is your organisation's biggest challenge at the moment (COVID-related or not), and how do you think being part of EViR can help address it?

Discussion:

It was widely agreed that the EViR membership inspires and enables members to promote change within their organisations. The panel acknowledged the benefits of accessing a network of funders, collaborating, learning and sharing best practice, for example, the use of the EViR Self-Audit tool allows members self-reflection on their practices and identify neglected areas that could be improved.

The panel recognised that COVID demonstrated that some practices (e.g. face to face funding committees, peer-reviewing process) could be delivered differently to allow business as usual to

be delivered. However, the group wondered if that is sustainable and, in some instances, previous practices might be reinstated.

Relevant links*:

- Recording.

Back to basics: reflecting on the Guiding Principles and what RoR tell us

Chair: Anne Cody (HRB, Ireland) with the support of Amanda Blatch-Jones (NIHR RoR, UK).

Purpose of the session:

- Overview of the Guiding Principles.
- Review progress made on the implementation of the Guiding Principles.
- Outline what Research on Research (RoR) tell us.
- Assess the current relevance of the Guiding Principles.

Discussion:

It was broadly recognised the Guiding Principles resonate with the EViR community and more widely in the research community. It was agreed while the Guiding Principles are still relevant, the following areas were recognised as not to be directly included in the Guiding Principles:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- Sustainability
- RoR

The group acknowledged the need to review the Guiding Principles and assess if new principles or the EViR statement might be needed to cover the above areas.

Relevant links*:

- Recording.
- **Presentation:** Back to basics: reflecting on the Guiding Principles and what RoR tells us - Anne Cody (Health Research Board, Ireland), Amanda Blatch-Jones (NIHR RoR, UK)
- [What funders are doing to assess the impact of their investments in health and biomedical research](#)

Enhancing efficiency and quality in research funding: The role of automation and digitalisation

Chair: Barbara van der Linden (ZonMw, The Netherlands)

Purpose of the session:

- Overview of the automatisisation and digitalisation tools identified at the 2020 EViR meeting in Berlin.
- Outline recent developments and reports.
- Opportunity to share and learn from other members.

Discussion:

The group shared some examples of the automated tools they use for different phases of the funding process, such as reviewers' identification or grant management systems. It was recognised that there are also challenges to automation and digitalisation, e.g.

- identifying tools that respond to an ever-changing landscape,
- ensuring data quality and assurance or
- time required to digitalise data manually.

Relevant links*:

- Recording
- **Presentation:** Enhancing efficiency and quality in research funding: the role of automation and digitalization – Barbara van der Linden (ZonMw, The Netherlands)
- [Review of research bureaucracy](#)
- [Research, development and innovation organisational landscape: an independent review](#)
- [Better, broader, safer: using health data for research and analysis](#)

Pre-clinical/clinical gap/translation

Chair: Merel Ritskes-Hoitinga (Utrecht University, The Netherlands).

Purpose of the session: Attendees had the opportunity to hear about:

- **Preclinical confirmatory studies and systematic reviews** – Cosima Pfenninger (DLR, Germany).
- **Importance of high-quality preclinical studies for translational success** – Natascha Drude (Berlin QUEST center, Germany).

Discussion:

The importance of high-quality preclinical studies and the generation of robust evidence for translational success was recognised. Concerns about the reproducibility of studies or lack of reliable evidence available were shared. The group debated the potential causes of low reproducibility and pointed out a lack of understanding or knowledge within the research community to produce robust evidence. However, steps are being taken to support researchers in producing reliable evidence.

Relevant links*:

- Recording.
- **Presentation:** Preclinical confirmatory studies and systematic reviews – Cosima Pfenninger (DLR, Germany).
- **Presentation:** Importance of high-quality preclinical studies for translational success – Natascha Drude (Berlin QUEST center, Germany).

Partnering to Ensure Value in Research: Research Funders and Guideline Developers

Speaker: Evelyn Whitlock

Purpose of the session: This presentation introduced a process developed for WHO's Handbook for Guideline Development that systematically identifies and prioritizes needed research during guideline development, emphasizing the potential for research funders to provide the research needed to improve guidelines efficiently.

Discussion:

The WHO guidelines are not designed to develop a complete research agenda for a topic but focus on research to improve the consistency and quality of WHO guidelines to maximise health impact. Reducing waste and duplication is a shared goal among funders and WHO. Both the WHO guidelines and the EViR Guiding Principles offer a framework for funders to improve the quality and impact of research.

Relevant links*:

- Recording.
- **Presentation:** Partnering to Ensure Value in Research. Harnessing Research Needs Identified During Guideline Development to Achieve EViR Principles - Evelyn Whitlock

Virtual meeting.

Welcome to Day 2

Day 2 focused on EViR work programme development and was thus limited to EViR member leads and relevant colleagues. The sessions focussed on hearing, reviewing and discussing the draft strategy proposed in September 2022, aiming to agree on an implementation proposal.

Session 1: Introduction of new members

Purpose of the session: New members had the opportunity to introduce themselves and their organisation. This session allowed members to know each other and create future network and collaboration opportunities.

Discussion:

The following members introduced themselves:

- Sheena Chan - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR, Canada).
- Beatrix Schumak - Deutsches Zentrum für Luft und Raumfahrt (DLR, Germany).
- Alan McNair - Chief Scientist Office, Scottish Government (CSO, UK).
- Jillian Harrison - Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre (KCE, Belgium).
- Steven Smith - Fight for Sight (UK).

Session 2: EViR strategy, and work plan: What will EViR do?

Purpose of the session: Development of the future EViR work programme following the September 2022 strategy meeting.

EViR members had been provided with an updated version of the EViR Strategy Workplan ahead of the meeting to inform the discussions. The following areas of interest were discussed:

- i. Guiding Principles – Anne Cody (HRB, Ireland).
- ii. Research on Research - RoR - Dottie Goble (NIHR, UK).
- iii. Sustainability - Dottie Goble (NIHR, UK).
- iv. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – EDI - Michael Bowdery (HCRW, UK).
- v. Low and middle-income countries – LMIC - Dottie Goble (NIHR, UK).
- vi. Membership and Governance - Michael Bowdery (HCRW, UK).
- vii. Communications and Engagement – Cristina Lujan Barroso (EViR, UK).

Meeting Closure

Michael Bowdery, on behalf of the Steering Group, thanked all attendees for joining the EViR round table meeting. The next EViR Round table meeting will be in Spring 2023 on 30 and 31 March 2023.

Appendix A – Meeting Registrations

Registrations – 27 October 2022

Steering Group:

Anne Cody	Health Research Board Ireland (HRB, Republic of Ireland)
Barbara van der Linden	The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw, The Netherlands)
Dottie Goble	National Institute of Health Research (NIHR, UK)
Michael Bowdery	Health & Care Research Wales (HCRW, Wales)
Staffan Arvidsson	Forte, Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte, Sweden)

Registrations:

Alan McNair	Scottish Government, UK
Alex Hills	HCRW, UK
Amanda Blatch-Jones	NIHR, UK
Antonino Cartabelotta	GIMBE Foundation, Italy
Aoife Cahill	HRB, Ireland
Bas de Waard	ZonMw, The Netherlands
Beatrix Schumak	German Aerospace Centre (DLR), Germany
Beccy Maeso	James Lind Alliance (JLA), UK
Bo van Leperen	Maag Lever Darm Stichting, The Netherlands
Charlotte Coates	The Scar Free Foundation, UK
Chiara Ciccarelli	Ministry of Health, Italy
Cosima Pfenninger	DLR, Germany
Danielle Kemmer	Graham Boeckh Foundation, Canada
Elise Radtke	DLR, Germany
Emma Thompson	Cochrane, UK
Evelyn Whitlock	Consultant, UK
Gavin Adams	Cochrane, UK
Ina van der Velde	Stichting Metakids, The Netherlands
James Wilsdon	Research on Research Institution
Janet Diffin	Public Health Agency, UK
Jess Glen	Health Research Council of NZ
Jillian Harrison	KCE, Belgium
Jong-Wook ban	HVL, The Evidence-Based Research Network (EBRN), Norway
Josie Jackson	HCRW, UK
Julia Menon	ZonMw, The Netherlands
Julie McCarroll	HSC R&D Division, Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland, UK
Julie Simpson	CSO, Scotland, UK
Karen Robinson	John Hopkins University, USA
Kelly Dunham	Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), USA
Lee Campbell	Cancer Research Wales, UK
Marie Osterberg	Swedish Agency for health technology assessment and assessment of social services (SBU), Sweden

Michiel van der Vaart	Hartstichting, The Netherlands
Monica Busse	HCRW, UK
Natascha Drude	Center for Responsible Research, Germany
Peter Henley	Cancer Research Wales, UK
Sandra Enright	HCRW, UK
Sheena Chan	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Canada
Simona Bifulchi	Ministry of Health, Italy
Ulrich Dirnagl	QUEST Center for Responsible Research, Germany
Virginia Minogue	Health Service Executive (HSE), Ireland
Wendy Reijmerink	ZonMw, The Netherlands

Honorary Members:

Merel Ritskes-Hoitinga	SYRCLE (The Netherlands)
Garry Aslanyan	ESSENCE/WHO (Switzerland)

EVIR Secretariat:

Cristina Lujan Barroso	EVIR Funders' Forum Head of Secretariat
Kathy Drust	EVIR Administrator

Registrations – 28 October 2022
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Steering Group:

Anne Cody	Health Research Board Ireland (HRB, Republic of Ireland)
Barbara van der Linden	The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development
	(ZonMw, The Netherlands)
Dottie Goble	National Institute of Health Research (NIHR, UK)
Michael Bowdery	Health & Care Research Wales (HCRW, Wales)

EVIR Forum members:

Amanda Blatch-Jones	NIHR, UK
Candance Imison	NIHR, UK
Elise Radtke	DLR, Germany
Emma Small	HCRW, UK
Jillian Harrison	KCE, Belgium
Laura Bunting	HCRW, UK
Louise Campbell	CSO, UK
Marianne Kordel	DLR, Germany
Sarah Puddicombe	NIHR, UK
Sheena Chan	CIHR, Canada
Stella Jacobson	Forte, Sweden

Invited attendees:

Kelly Dunham	Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI, USA)
Jessica Hostetler	PCORI, USA

Secretariat:

Cristina Lujan Barroso	EVIR Funders' Forum Secretariat Lead
Kathy Drust	EVIR Administrator

Appendix B - Presenters

Amanda Jane Blatch-Jones (NIHR, UK)



Senior Research Fellow for the Research on Research (RoR) programme, which is an internal programme of work contracted through the NIHR, Evaluations Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC).

She joined the RoR team in 2012 and is responsible for and provides oversight for the conduct, delivery and dissemination of the RoR programme. The RoR programme provides robust evidence to improve the efficiency of NIHR's research management processes and to contribute to the wider evidence base on research management processes from commissioning of research through to dissemination.

Anne Cody (HRB, Ireland)



PhD, MSc Bus Practice. Head of Investigator-led Grants, Research Careers and Enablers, Health Research Board

Anne has a background in cell biology and spent ten years as a researcher in Germany and Ireland. She has been working with the Health Research Board in a variety of roles for 20 years. During this time, she has gained experience across a wide spectrum of health research and funding instruments from infrastructures over health research careers to knowledge translation awards and worked with many co-funders.

Anne is currently responsible for the HRB's Investigator-led Grants, Research Careers and Enablers. She has been the driver behind the HRB's systems approach to Public, Patient and Carer Involvement (PPI). She has been actively involved in tackling unconscious bias, has initiated transparency initiatives and has led a [self-audit assessing the HRB's performance against recommendations to maximising research value](#). This has led her together with Kelly Dunham from PCORI to develop a self-assessment tool specifically directed at funders, which is available to EViR member organisations.

Barbara van der Linden (ZonMw, Netherlands)



MD, PhD (1962). Barbara has worked at the Netherlands Health Research Funder ZonMw since 2004, first as an implementation officer for long term care and since 2008 as staff member in Implementation and Innovation.

She is responsible for ZonMw's implementation policies and leads the ZonMw implementation team. She has written reports on cost saving interventions, Choosing Wisely, and Strengthening Impact and publications on implementation and innovation in research. In 2017 she became co-convenor of the international Ensuring Value in Research (EViR) Health Funders Forum on behalf of ZonMw. She leads the EViR working group on Dissemination and Implementation. Barbara is one of the initiators of the Netherlands Implementation Collective (NIC).

Charlotte Coates (The Scar Free Foundation, UK)



Head of Research Funds at The Scar Free Foundation where she is responsible for the strategic development of the Foundation's research strategy and the direction of the processes for the management of research.

Charlotte joined The Foundation in 2014 having previously been Research Manager at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society for 5 years. Prior to this she worked in private office and project management positions at the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman and the BBC.

Dottie Goble (NIHR, UK)



Assistant Director for the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR UK) Journals Library, with oversight on publications across the Health Technology Assessment and Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation programmes.

She has a key role in ensuring transparency and open research across the NIHR, leading the development of the Clinical Trial registration and dissemination of results and is currently implementing data sharing mechanisms across the NIHR. Before working with the NIHR, she had 15 years' experience in local government policy development and community engagement.

Evelyn P. Whitlock

M.D., M.P.H. was appointed as the Chief Science Officer for the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) in Washington, D.C. in September, 2015 and served in that role until June, 2018.

Under her leadership, PCORI helped co-found the Ensuring Value in Research Funders Forum. Subsequently, after an additional year as Senior Science Advisor at PCORI, Dr. Whitlock stepped down in order to develop the work described in this presentation. Prior to PCORI, Dr. Whitlock spent nearly 25 years conducting federally funded health research in the US, including extensive experience in the Agency for Healthcare Research's Evidence-Based Practice Center program. In retirement, Whitlock has pivoted to working in the volunteer/advocacy sector to respond to the climate crisis.

Michael Bowdery (HCRW, UK)



Currently Head of Programmes with Health and Care Research Wales and the Welsh Government's Health and Social Services Research and Development Division and Chair of the EViR Funders' Forum. His responsibilities include: cross-funder partnership working; facilitation and management of Welsh involvement in UK programmes; and overall management of the Health and Care Research Wales grant schemes and research development infrastructure.

Michael has seven years of active research experience as a behavioural psychologist in the School of Psychology, Bangor University, and has worked with children with learning disabilities and challenging behaviour in care, play and educational settings.

Prior to joining Research and Development Division, Michael worked as a Media Officer in the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, with responsibility for both media relations and the management of the Chief Medical Officer's website. He also has experience in crisis management, through secondments to the Welsh Government's Agriculture Department and Foot and Mouth Inquiries Team.

Merel Ritskes-Hoitinga (Utrecht University, Netherlands)



Professor in Evidence-Based Transition to Animal-Free Innovations since June 2022 at Utrecht University. Honorary SKOU professorship at Aarhus University.

Since her graduation as a vet in 1986, she has been committed to the goal of improving the quality of science and animal welfare, aiming to obtain results that are more translatable to the human patient. From 2005-2017 Merel became the head of the Centraal Dierenlaboratorium at Radboudumc and was appointed professor in Laboratory Animal Science. She founded SYRCLE (Systematic Review Center for Laboratory Experimentation) in 2012. From 2017-2022 she was professor in Evidence-Based Laboratory Animal Science at Radboudumc. Together with Bas de Waard from ZonMw, she co-chairs the preclinical working group within EViR.

Natascha Drude (Berlin Institute of Health at Charité, Germany)



Natascha Drude holds a degree in both chemistry and laboratory animal science (MLAS RWTH Aachen).

She obtained her Ph.D. in drug development and molecular imaging and is a certified laboratory animal science specialist (FELASA LAS specialist). In 2020 she joined the team at the Berlin Institute of Health at Charité at the QUEST Center for Responsible Research in Berlin developing best practice guides for confirmatory preclinical multicenter studies. As the coordinator for [Responsible Preclinix](#), Natascha wants to take an active part in improving and understanding the translation from preclinical studies toward clinical application. She is an external advisor and animal welfare officer for a company that supports translating medical devices into daily clinical routines

Staffan Arvidsson (Forte, Sweden)



Senior Research Officer at Forte, The Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare.

Staffan is the Program Manager of Forte's National Program on Implementation Research and the vice Program Manager for Forte's National Program on "Applied Welfare Research", which specifically targets the social care services. Staffan has previously been the Program Manager of Vinnvard, a Swedish National Program in Improvement Science.