

Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke

Our Research Strategy 2014-2018



1. Introduction

Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke's (NICHHS) overall vision is one where everyone in Northern Ireland can live life to the full, free from chest, heart and stroke illnesses. We aim to achieve this vision by funding research to further develop our understanding and knowledge about how to prevent, diagnose and treat chest, heart and stroke illnesses.

This document sets out a 4-year research strategy for NICHHS. The views and the expert opinions from researchers, practitioners, service users and other stakeholders as well as the findings from a desktop research and analysis exercise, all helped to shape and inform this strategy.

NICHHS's Governance Board endorsed and agreed this Research Strategy at its meeting in March 2014. This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

2. Where are we now

Since 1994 NICHHS has invested over 6.6 million pounds into researching the prevention, treatment and care of chest, heart and stroke illnesses. To date this investment has enabled us to fund 72 research projects in total, with 55 projects completed and a further 17 on-going. Over the years, 37 respiratory projects, 26 projects in the field of cardiology or heart research and 9 stroke projects have been undertaken.

Although death rates of those under 65 as a result of chest, heart and stroke diseases are falling, the number of people experiencing these chronic conditions is increasing each year. Diseases of the circulatory system are still the major cause of death in NI, with 50% of these caused by coronary heart disease (CHD), 28% by stroke and 22% by other diseases of the circulatory system¹

NICHHS appreciates the value of research evidence and is very much committed to investing in research to minimise the impact of these disease at a local level.

3. What we want to achieve

Our new 4-year research strategy aims to build on our strengths and achievements to date and to set out our new vision, mission and strategic goals to be achieved over the next four years. NICHHS's overall vision is 'where everyone in Northern Ireland can live life to the full, free from chest, heart and stroke illnesses, but it is important that we have a research vision and mission too, as set out below.

1. Prevalence data in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (2012/2013 data) www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk

4. Vision

To contribute to a world free from chest, heart and stroke illnesses by investing in research that delivers real improvements and maximum benefits for people living with, or at risk of chest, heart and stroke illness.

5. Mission

To invest strategically in high quality local research that demonstrates the greatest impact for the care and prevention of chest, heart and stroke illnesses.

6. Values and principles

1. **Quality**– we aim to fund high quality research that improves our understanding of chest, heart and stroke illnesses.
2. **Impact** – we aim to fund research that will produce a positive impact and benefit for people living with or at risk of developing chest, heart and stroke illness.
3. **Integrity** - we are honest and transparent in how we operate, working hard to deliver accountability and cost-effectiveness by ensuring every penny we spend on research has a maximum benefit. We act responsibly and work to high standards of governance.
4. **Professionalism**- we aim to have the credibility and drive to deliver our research programme and for our research to be valued at a world class level.
5. **Involvement and partnerships** - we ensure that the views of chest, heart and stroke survivors and the expert opinion from researchers and practitioners shapes our research work and that we work in partnership with others to achieve the greatest impact in the global fight against these illnesses.

7. Strategic direction

- Our research strategy builds on our past achievements and identifies new areas for development.
- Our strategy is to continue to fund high quality research into chest, heart and stroke illnesses. The focus of this new strategy will be on funding research that can also show a potential impact and benefit for people living with or at risk of developing chest, heart and stroke illness.
- NICHS will invest strategically in high quality local research that demonstrates the greatest impact for the care and prevention of chest, heart and stroke illnesses.
- NICHS's current research application process does not require researchers to present the potential impact of their research and in order to address this issue; we are conducting a comprehensive review of our grant awarding process, guidance and of our applications form.
- We are also putting measures in place to improve our peer review process as well as providing peer reviewers with the necessary information that they require in order to select the best research that will be of most benefit to people and the families we work with.
- This strategy also places an emphasis on involving patients and the public in the design, delivery and dissemination of research.
- NICHS may fund research priorities that are identified by researchers themselves or fund priority areas for action identified by our organisation, Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke.
- We are committed to strengthening research capacity within Northern Ireland, particularly in areas that address critical gaps in research evidence and that is aligned with our strategy.

- NICHHS will engage with our key stakeholders on an annual basis to agree our research priorities and we will examine the feasibility of introducing ‘themed calls’ for proposals that reflect our priorities.
- All the research that we will fund will be of high quality, using appropriate research methods, and which is likely to produce results that are relevant to our vision, values and strategic goals.
- In order to demonstrate how we will measure achievement of our vision, NICHHS has created five goals that, we aim to achieve by 2018.

8. Strategic goals

Our five strategic goals are all about introducing a ‘focus’ to our research in order to achieve better results that are relevant to our vision, strategic direction and maximises impact and return of investment.

1. **Focus our research by identifying and prioritising our research topics in order to secure scientific quality and clinical impact.**
2. **Obtaining the maximum benefit for people of NI by measuring the impact of and return on investment of our research**
3. **Contributing to the development of evidence based NICHHS services and policy work**
4. **Utilising public and patient inclusion in the design, delivery and dissemination of research.**
5. **Supporting the best structures and environment for research to ensure a professional, credible and high quality research programme is provided**

9. Implementing our strategy

There are in essence five key stages to delivering this strategy as follows:

1. Funding high quality research that meets our research goals, priorities and our internal funding criteria and processes.
2. Signing off contracts with the successful applicants and then monitoring progress through reports.
3. Conducting an annual evaluation to assess the impact of research funded by NICHHS.
4. Evaluating and reporting on the outcome of the final strategy looking at new process, impact and return on investment.
5. Communicating the findings through a range of channels.

10. Monitoring and accountability

The strategy will be monitored by the Scientific Research Committee, NICHHS Senior Management Team and the Board of Directors via Operational Plan reports and responsible Director presentations. The Research and Policy Co-ordinator will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the strategy, impact evaluations and production of reports

11. Review

This strategy will be reviewed formally in six months, but monitored on an ongoing basis and the approach adjusted accordingly when necessary.