



Who we are...

Keele Clinical Trials Unit (CTU), based in the School of Medicine at Keele University, is a specialist unit that designs, conducts, analyses and publishes high quality clinical trials and other well-designed studies. If you're looking to collaborate with us, email:

ctu.operations@keele.ac.uk

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This second edition of our newsletter highlights the progress being made across our research studies, celebrates key strategic developments and showcases the growth of our community partnerships. Over the past months, our operational teams have continued to deliver high-quality research, strengthen collaborations and contribute to national initiatives that shape the future of clinical trials.



The NIHR celebrates 20 years

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is celebrating 20 years of driving life-changing research that matters. From faster diagnoses to better treatments and improved quality of care, NIHR research changes lives across the UK. For research to happen faster and work for everyone, sign up to Be Part of Research:

<https://tinyurl.com/yj7csva8>



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CTU Highlights & News

Update to UK Clinical Trials rules

From 28 April 2026, the UK will introduce its biggest update to clinical trial regulations in over 20 years. The reforms aim to make trials faster and simpler to set up, especially lower-risk and early-phase studies, while maintaining strong patient safety and ethical standards. Key changes include quicker approval routes, clearer rules for trial amendments, improved transparency of results, and alignment with updated international Good Clinical Practice. Overall, the update is designed to speed access to new treatments and strengthen the UK's position as a leader in clinical research. You can read more here: <https://tinyurl.com/5yhzw9nb>

INcreasing Capacity and Capability in Clinical Trials Across Malaysia, Thailand and the UK (INCCCA) Partnership

We are delighted to be leading the INCCCA Programme during 2026. This partnership between the UK, Malaysia and Thailand strengthens global clinical trials expertise through training, skills development and mentorship. It supports women and under-represented researchers, promoting inclusive, culturally aware, sustainable research that helps teams to design high-quality trial protocols to boost future funding and long-term research capacity. Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/3uunczsb>

Spotlight on Staff

Trial Manager, **Clare Thompson** attended 'Personal Development Day' in December 2025 at Thistley Hough Academy. Spending the day with Year 10 students she discussed careers in research and helped them build skills in confidence and communication through interview-style practice. This is an annual event we look forward to, sharing our passion for research with the next generation.

Trial Manager, **Steff Garvin**, has won the 2025 UK Trial Manager Network (UKTMN) PPI Champion award for her contributions to Patient & Public Involvement activities.

Ivonne Solis-Trapala, CTU Director, has been accepted as a member on the new UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) Research Inclusion thematic group. Trial Managers **Gemma Hughes** and **Emma Marshall** have also been successful in joining the 'Methods into Practice' and 'Sustainability' groups.



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Strengthening Local Partnerships

In November 2025, we hosted a 'Meet the Team' event with colleagues from University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust. It was a great opportunity to connect, share visions, and explore ways to work together on health research that benefits our local community. We're excited about what lies ahead and look forward to making a real difference together.



Community Involvement & Engagement

Keele CTU out and about...

Since our last update, we've been very busy out in the community, engaging with and connecting to even more people. It's been great to meet new faces and have meaningful conversations across a range of local settings. We've visited the Madeley Centre, Penkhull Community Café, Keele Freshers Fair, Newcastle Job Centre, Newcastle Library, and Bradwell Hospital, helping us reach a wider and more diverse audience. If you want to find out more, email ctu.inspire@keele.ac.uk or follow our social media channels!

iNSPIRE Community Lounge

The iNSPIRE Community Lounge is a place to connect with others, share experiences and be part of a supportive research community. Open to everyone, it takes place on the **last Wednesday** of every month at **Keele-In-Town**, Newcastle town centre, at **10am**. Come in for a chat and a brew.



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Study Updates

Treatments of Exercise And Orthotics for plantar heel pain – TREADON



The TREADON trial has now closed to recruitment with a total of **703** participants. The final participants are entering their 12-week intervention/treatment period, and the last follow-up is scheduled in 12 months' time.

Oral Corticosteroids and Colchicine for the treatment of gout flares



The OCCUR trial is now open, recruiting people with gout who cannot use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Gout flares are commonly treated with anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen, which is part of medicines known as NSAIDs, however, many people with gout have other health conditions which mean they cannot safely take NSAIDs. For them, gout flares can be treated with colchicine or steroid tablets. The trial aims to find out whether colchicine or steroid tablets are more effective for treating gout flares in people who cannot take NSAIDs, and which treatment has fewer side effects.

Multi-level Integrated Data for musculoskeletal intelligence and ActionS (MIDAS)



The MIDAS team were nominated for the Arthritis UK Research Highlight of the Year 2025 for their work on inequalities in MSK outcomes. You can read more here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40664415>

Celebrating International Clinical Trials Day

We're excited to be celebrating **International Clinical Trials Day** this year under the NIHR's special theme: NIHR 20 – 20 Years of the National Institute for Health Research. To mark the occasion, our team will be joining colleagues in Birmingham as well as taking part in local celebrations. We'll be out and about showcasing the incredible impact of clinical research over the past two decades, so keep an eye on our social media channels to see where we'll be and what we're getting up to!

To find out more about any of the information contained in this newsletter, please contact:

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