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## Media Release

### **RNHRD to lead £2 million research into Psoriatic Arthritis**

The Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (RNHRD) has been awarded just under £2 million to lead on research into improving the lives of those with the painful arthritic condition Psoriatic Arthritis (PsA).

Part of the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust (RUH), the RNHRD provides a specialist service for patients with PsA and is highly regarded nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence for the condition – helping sufferers to work towards a pain free, active life through a tailored combination of therapy, drugs and exercise.

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) awarded the £2m grant for a five-year programme of research to improve diagnosis, referral pathways and clinical care for people with PsA. The RNHRD will lead on the research programme in partnership with the University of Bath, and will work with other NHS Trusts and universities across the country.

PsA is an inflammatory arthritis which affects around 400,000 people in England. It causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints and is accompanied in some severe cases by a chronic disfiguring skin disease. There is currently no specific test for PsA but emerging evidence suggests that earlier diagnosis and treatment can help reduce the effects of this disease.

Professor Neil McHugh, Consultant Rheumatologist at the RNHRD and Professor of Pharmacoepidemiology at the University of Bath, will lead the research project. He said:

“I am delighted that we have received this significant amount of funding, this represents one of the largest awards ever granted to the RNHRD. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues across the country to make further progress in identifying and tackling this long term condition.

“Working with the University of Bath and drawing on expertise across the NHS will allow us to deliver evidence-based, practical recommendations for tests that can look for the disease in its early stage, leading to quicker referrals for those with PsA.

“This research will also help us understand the best way to care for people with this condition as well as how to develop educational material and guidelines to provide support to patients, carers and the healthcare community.”

Professor McHugh added: “Understanding patients’ experience of this disease will be at the heart of this research. If we want to measure whether treatment for PsA is effective, we need to identify what matters to patients – looking not just at physical aspects, such as fatigue and pain, but also mental health and wellbeing and broader quality of life measures such as the ability to work or socialise.”

Research and development continues to underpin the high quality, evidence-based care delivered both at the RNHRD and the RUH. The recent affiliation of both research teams has served to create

a powerhouse for health research in the City of Bath, strengthened further by its links to other renowned local research institutions such as the University of Bath.

## **Ends**

### **Notes to the editor:**

### **Funding**

The study has been funded by National Institute for Health (NIHR) Research Programme Grants for Applied Research (ref: RP-PG-1212-20007.)

### **Professor McHugh**

Professor McHugh graduated from Otago University Medical School New Zealand, completed physician training before specialising in the sub-specialty of Rheumatology and has had research fellowships at the Walter Elisa Hall in Melbourne (1985), Yale University Medical School (1990-1991) and the National Heart and Lung Institute (2002-2004). He has been a Consultant Rheumatologist at the RNHRD since 1991.

### **Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases**

**[www.rnhrd.nhs.uk](http://www.rnhrd.nhs.uk)**

The RNHRD – part of the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust – provides specialist rehabilitation and rheumatology services to adults, children and young people. The RNHRD has expertise in general and complex:

- Rheumatological and musculoskeletal conditions,
- Chronic pain management, including Complex Regional Pain Syndrome
- Fatigue management (CFS/ME and cancer survivorship fatigue).

The RNHRD enjoys a national and international reputation for research, which informs the treatment provided by the hospital's world-class clinicians and contributes to a better understanding of many of the conditions in which the NRHRD specialises.

Researchers at the RNHRD are currently involved in a number of National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) projects covering a variety of conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, connective tissue diseases and pain.

### **Research Programme Partners**

- Bath and North East Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Keele University
- Kings College London
- Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust
- University of Bath
- University College Dublin
- University of Leeds
- University of Manchester
- University of the West of England, Bristol
- University of York
- University Hospital of North Staffordshire NHS Trust

### **University of Bath**

**[www.bath.ac.uk/research](http://www.bath.ac.uk/research)**

The University of Bath is one of the UK's leading universities both in terms of research and reputation for excellence in teaching, learning and graduate prospects.

Ninety-three per cent of the University's Pharmacy & Pharmacology research was rated as world leading or internationally excellent in the recent independently-assessed Research Excellence Framework 2014. Overall, Bath ranked in the top three of universities with a School of Pharmacy.

Well established as a nurturing environment for enterprising minds, Bath is ranked in the top ten of most national league tables. The university has also been voted number one in the UK for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey (NSS) for two years running.

### **The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)**

**[www.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.nihr.ac.uk)**

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is funded by the Department of Health to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. Since its establishment in April 2006, the NIHR has transformed research in the NHS. It has increased the volume of applied health research for the benefit of patients and the public, driven faster translation of basic science discoveries into tangible benefits for patients and the economy, and developed and supported the people who conduct and contribute to applied health research. The NIHR plays a key role in the Government's strategy for economic growth, attracting investment by the life-sciences industries through its world-class infrastructure for health research. Together, the NIHR people, programmes, centres of excellence and systems represent the most integrated health research system in the world. For further information, visit the NIHR website ([www.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.nihr.ac.uk)).

NIHR research programmes fund research using a wide range of study designs, including but not only, evidence synthesis, pilot and feasibility studies, randomised controlled trials and both quantitative and qualitative.

The scale of funding ranges from a project – or an individual study – to a programme of linked studies that are funded together as a programme of research.