

Cardiff: Clinical Trials in Nephrology and Transplantation

Kidney disease has a detrimental impact on quality of life, morbidity and mortality, the management of which attracts considerable NHS costs. The integration of the clinical expertise of the Directorate of Nephrology and Transplantation within the Wales Kidney Research Unit provides a dynamic and creative environment for clinical research studies and trials. We aim to develop a culture where all patients are routinely offered the opportunity to take part in a study for which they are eligible.

The Cardiff Renal Unit has a catchment population of 1.5 million for renal services and 2.25 million for kidney and pancreas transplantation. As such, we are an attractive participating site for both investigator-led and commercial studies and have increasingly been able to capitalise on this. The areas of clinical trials in which there is local investigator expertise include: Acute Kidney Injury (Aled Phillips, Soma Meran), Chronic Kidney Disease (Donald Fraser), Vasculitis and Glomerulonephritis (Siân Griffin), haemodialysis (Ruth Benzimra, Soma Meran, Aled Phillips), peritoneal dialysis (Donald Fraser, Kieron Donovan), acute transplantation and long-term management of transplant recipients (Siân Griffin, Argiris Asderakis, Laszlo Szabo, Elijah Ablorsu). Clinical studies in the unit directly benefit from laboratory support provided by the Institute of Nephrology, and several studies are run jointly between the directorate and the Clinical Research Facility. Within the directorate there are close links between NHS and Academic clinicians, and several joint scientific studies with other university departments (in particular immunology) and the Welsh Transplant and Immunogenetics Laboratory. The transplant surgeons are one of eight National teams for Organ Retrieval, which provides an invaluable opportunity for participation in trials of organ perfusion and assessment of organ quality. The surgeons also supply omental biopsies, taken at the time of donor nephrectomy, to the Institute of Nephrology for isolation of peritoneal cells.

The directorate also has a keen interest in aspects of patient care at the interface between clinical research and service development, for example developing an IT driven understanding of the relationship between electronic alerts and Acute Kidney Injury (AKI), led by Aled Philips. This is an all Wales initiative that will improve understanding of regional variation and outcomes and inform service need. Working with the UK Renal Registry, this project will help inform a better predictive model for AKI in different clinical settings.

Over the last five years, 11 nephrology and surgical trainees have completed or are undertaking research projects leading to higher degrees (MD or PhD), supported by the WCAT scheme and personal grants from Kidney Research UK and the Wellcome Trust.

The clinical trials portfolio of the directorate has undergone rapid expansion and now includes a range of observational and interventional trials, both investigator-led and commercial, covering all aspects of nephrology and renal replacement therapy.

A particularly exciting area is the involvement in early phase and randomised controlled trials in immune-mediated renal disease. Until recently, development of therapeutic options for glomerulonephritis generally involved re-purposing of drugs licenced for other indications (eg rituximab). However, we are now beginning recruitment of patients to commercial trials of drugs

that have been specifically developed for renal diseases, including IgA nephropathy, ANCA associated vasculitis, FSGS and aHUS.

From a national perspective, the renal community has invested in the establishment of the UK Kidney Research Consortium (UKKRC), which brings together clinicians, professional societies, the leading renal charity and industry to foster the development and promotion of multi-centre studies. The UKKRC comprises 12 specific disease area Clinical Study Groups (CSG). Several Consultants in the department are CSG members. These national roles enable the unit to participate in the design of, and recruitment to, multi-centre studies, and new members are always welcome.

Interested?

Come and join us!

You'll be seeing patients who are eligible for trials on a daily basis and we'd be delighted to help you get more involved.

Our patients face too many unknown unknowns and without enthusiasm for research studies we will stand still.

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