



## BOARD MEETING

### Minutes of the teleconference held on Monday 11 May 2020

#### Members:

Prof M Grocott	Chair, NIAA Board
Mrs J Dorey	Royal College of Anaesthetists' Lay Committee rep
Ms S Drake	Director of Clinical Quality & Research, Royal College of Anaesthetists
Dr K Ferguson	Association of Anaesthetists
Prof H Galley	<i>British Journal of Anaesthesia</i>
Prof A Klein	<i>Anaesthesia</i>

#### Co-opted members:

Dr G Ackland	Experimental Medicine Lead
Prof R Moonesinghe	Director, Health Services Research Centre
Dr B Ratnayake	Specialist Society Representative (2019 – 2020)

#### In attendance:

Mr J Goodwin	Research Manager, Royal College of Anaesthetists
Ms P Hines	Committee Secretary (NIAA Coordinator)

#### Apologies:

Prof J Hall	Royal College of Anaesthetists' Council
Dr D Martin	Academic Training Coordinator
Dr M Nathanson	Chair, NIAA Research Council (to September 2020)
Prof R Pearse	Director, UK Perioperative Medicine Clinical Trials Network
Dr M Wilson	NIAA Grants Officer

#### NIAAB/05.2020/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked those who were able to attend during this busy period. Apologies noted as above.

#### NIAAB/05.2020/2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the joint Board & Research Council meeting held on 24 February 2020 were reviewed. Prof Grocott noted a discrepancy under item 12: *BOC Chair of Anaesthesia* relating to his declaration of conflicts of interest, and asked that the minutes be rectified accordingly.

**ACTION: Ms Hines to make required amendment and upload the confirmed non-confidential minutes of the Board & Research Council meeting held on 24 February 2020 to the NIAA website.**

#### NIAAB/05.2020/3 MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising were discussed.

#### NIAAB/05.2020/4 COVID-19, RESEARCH ACTIVITY & THE NIAA

Prof Grocott reminded members of the decision taken in March by the Board to pause a number of NIAA activities and projects given the rapidly developing COVID-19 situation and its knock-on effects, including the BOC Award, Round 1 grants process, external review and Anaesthesia Research meeting. He noted that most national research activities have also similarly been paused, outlining the uncertainties and concerns around reduced funding across the healthcare sector. Dr Ratnayake noted that many specialist societies' participation in future grant rounds may be affected due to lower income, as many spec socs' large conferences have been either postponed or cancelled and industry sponsorships may be affected. Prof Galley advised that the BJA had taken the decision to contact current grant holders and offer funding support including grant extensions and additional financial support, which may also affect their future grant participation. Prof Moonesinghe reflected the discussions that had taken place at a recent UK Clinical Research Collaborative meeting which echoed the same general views as outlined by the rest of the group, and noted that NHS England

had recently indicated their intentions to re-start the National Audit Programme in the near future. Prof Grocott advised that it would be key for the NIAA to start considering where opportunities may lie when activities do resume, to avoid a detrimental future impact on the perioperative research community as a whole. Ms Drake suggested it would be helpful for each specialist society to provide an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on their future grant making abilities so as to help mitigate these risks, and Prof Grocott proposed that conversations within RCoA fundraising should be revisited. Prof Klein advised that the Association/*Anaesthesia* has retained its budget for the 2020 grant-making period and would therefore be in a position to participate in the NIAA grants Round 2, but questioned whether research projects would have sufficiently resumed by this stage and/or if Round 2 should have a COVID specific focus. Discussion on this continued under item 7.

**ACTION: Ms Hines to contact NIAA partners for an update on the impact of COVID-19 on future grant making**

**ACTION: Prof Grocott and Ms Drake to discuss RCoA fundraising opportunities**

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/5 NIAA EXTERNAL REVIEW**

Prof Grocott asked members to consider whether it felt feasible to continue with the external review later in the year on a virtual basis. It was noted that much of the review activity could be conducted remotely, and it would be sensible to get a general steer from the Board now so as to progress with the proposed actions and return to the next meeting with a more defined plan for wider discussion. Members agreed with resuming the external review in the autumn, which would also provide the opportunity to consider the impact of COVID in planning future NIAA strategic direction. Members also agreed that in light of this, stakeholders should be offered the opportunity to revise any testimonial statements previously submitted.

**ACTION: Ms Hines to contact review panel members to establish availability for autumn 2020**

**ACTION: Ms Hines to notify NIAA stakeholders of opportunity to revise submitted statements in light of COVID-19**

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/6 ANAESTHESIA RESEARCH 2020**

Members discussed the implications for holding the originally proposed event in the current climate, and considered whether it would be worth the investment of planning time and resources even as far forward as the end of the year given social distancing may still be in place. There was unanimous agreement that the event should not be continued in its original format this calendar year. Prof Grocott asked the Board to consider whether a virtual event would be viable as an alternative, to recognise the achievements of the research community through a dedicated forum and to retain the momentum established with last year's collaborative event. A remote format would also greatly reduce costs. Members agreed this would be worth investigating; Prof Klein noted the success of the Association's recent webinar series demonstrating an increased appetite for this format given the current circumstances, and noted that the platform in use is reliable and low cost. Prof Grocott agreed to work up a proposal for discussion at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Prof Grocott to work up a proposal for a reconfigured virtual Anaesthesia Research meeting**

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/7 NIAA GRANTS**

Members discussed Dr Wilson's brief update agreeing that although there may be less funds available, plans to continue with Round 2 should at least be kept under review and could potentially offer funding support for COVID related projects. It was noted that continuing with the round can be done remotely, reducing any risks from meeting in person, and subject to no second surge in the coming months that may divert time and resources. It was discussed that should this occur, grants activity could be paused again. Consideration was given on whether the round should be open to standard research projects, COVID research, or both. Members agreed that it should be an open round that encourages COVID applications but does not preclude any other submissions.

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/8 BOC AWARD 2020**

Prof Grocott advised members of the conversations between himself and Prof Hall following the pause on this activity. Prof Hall had been considering whether the existing applications submitted

before COVID would be relevant going forward, whether candidates should be offered the opportunity to revise their submissions in light of this, and whether this should then mean that the competition opens up to accept new applications. Members discussed the implications and the difficulty of the situation, acknowledging that COVID is likely to have an impact on the resources and focus for many researchers who may not be in a position to continue with their planned project. Equally, projects that may have been deemed less relevant beforehand could now be deemed more pertinent given changing research priorities, and vice versa, since applications were made. It was noted that the BOC Award is a large investment both financially and in the individual candidate. On balance, there was agreement that in the interests of fairness and given the changed climate the competition should be cancelled now and reinstated in 2021. Dr Ferguson questioned whether there had been any contact with the existing applicants, who may have similar concerns to those outlined by the Board. Ms Hines confirmed that she had been providing updates to applicants on the decision to reconvene the review panel in the autumn. It was accepted that candidates may be disappointed with this decision but this was felt to be the most appropriate action under the circumstances.

**ACTION: Ms Hines to notify existing applicants of decision to cancel the BOC Award competition until 2021**

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/9 EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

Prof Moonesinghe confirmed that the final report had been circulated and discussed at the last meeting. Following this, the suggested amendments were made and the report uploaded to the NIAA website. Any further activity on this work has been paused, including drafting any proposals for the costs of implementing the action plan. It was agreed that a plan would be brought forward to the next meeting, either by Prof Moonesinghe or a delegate. Prof Moonesinghe noted that the impact of launching the report recommendations are likely to be lost in the current climate, so the timing needs to be considered carefully. Prof Grocott suggested that it may be appropriate to launch this during the reconfigured Anaesthesia Research meeting later in the year.

**ACTION: Prof Moonesinghe to work up proposal for EDI implementation plan including any costs, for further discussion**

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/10 NIHR SPECIALTY GROUP**

Prof Grocott highlighted that the specialty was probably one of the hardest hit during the crisis due to the diversion of large numbers of anaesthetists to cope with the surge in critical care cases. Most NIHR portfolio studies have been paused and Prof Grocott noted that as regular activities are resumed the decisions on which studies will be re-started will be based on which are deemed to still be relevant and achievable, which may cause some concern for teams of investigators.

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/11 ACADEMIC TRAINING**

Prof Grocott advised that Dr Martin had confirmed his ongoing research into ACF and ACL posts had been paused, but is intended to continue and he will bring a further report to a future meeting.

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/12 CLINICAL TRIALS NETWORK**

Prof Grocott recapped Prof Pearse's brief report which highlighted that the CTN led trial VITAL is the first to have received a substantial NIHR HTA grant, which is a great success for the Network.

#### **NIAAB/05.2020/13 HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH CENTRE**

Prof Moonesinghe advised that the PQIP data collection platform will also be used for the VITAL study previously mentioned. Most other HSRC projects have been paused; sites have been offered the opportunity to stop actively recruiting patients to PQIP – some are continuing to recruit, NAP7 has been postponed until at least the autumn, and CASAP recruitment has been paused. Prof Moonesinghe is also involved in developing a chloroquine international clinical trial on prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 amongst healthcare workers, which is expected to be given urgent Public Health status this week. This study will start recruitment through the QuARC network within the next few weeks.

**NIAAB/05.2020/14 EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE AND DISCOVERY SCIENCE GROUP**

There was no discussion under this item.

**NIAAB/05.2020/15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr Goodwin notified members that this would be his last NIAA meeting as he would shortly be starting a senior role within the Faculties team at the RCoA. Prof Grocott extended thanks to Mr Goodwin for his contribution and wished him well.

**NIAAB/05.2020/16 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- NIAA Board & Research Council, Tuesday 21 July 2020, 10:00 – 13:00, Teleconference
- NIAA Board, Tuesday 10 November 2020, 14:00 – 16:00, Teleconference

**ACTION POINTS**

Item		Responsible	Action	Due
2	Minutes of previous meeting	Ms Hines	Upload the amended confirmed non-confidential minutes of meeting held on 24 February 2020 to the NIAA website	Next meeting
4	COVID-19, research activity & the NIAA	Ms Hines	Contact NIAA partners for update on COVID-19 impact on future grant making	ASAP
		Prof Grocott Ms Drake	Discuss RCoA fundraising opportunities	Next meeting
5	NIAA External Review	Ms Hines	Contact review panel members to establish availability for autumn 2020	ASAP
		Ms Hines	Notify NIAA stakeholders of opportunity to revise submitted statements in light of COVID-19	ASAP
6	Anaesthesia Research 2020	Prof Grocott	Work up a proposal for a reconfigured virtual Anaesthesia Research meeting	Next meeting
8	BOC Award	Ms Hines	Notify existing applicants of decision to cancel BOC Award competition until 2021	ASAP
9	Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion	Prof Moonesinghe	Work up proposal for EDI implementation plan including any costs, for further discussion	Next meeting