



THE NIHR ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SCHEME



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The pandemic has posed new challenges for clinical research. Research staff have been redeployed to assist with acute care, and inevitably research into COVID-19 has often taken priority over studies into other conditions.

While this has been tempered by a renewed interest in clinical research and an appreciation of its importance, there has never been a more difficult time to deliver it at the local level. It is during this time, and looking to the future, that the Associate Principal Investigator (API) scheme has become vitally important.

The API scheme is intended to help develop the next generation of Principal Investigators (PIs) from trainees, non-trainees, nurses and allied healthcare professionals, and provides a mechanism

for formal recognition of engagement in NIHR portfolio research. There are clear benefits to all involved: the API learns about the challenges and practicalities of delivering a portfolio study, understands the responsibilities associated with the PI role, and their participation is recognised through certification for their CPD portfolio. In turn, the PI has additional support with delivery of the study (while they remain legally responsible), the trial benefits from an increased awareness among site staff which hopefully translates into a more efficient study delivery, and

ultimately patients benefit through increased opportunity to be involved in high-quality research.

Nichola Manu, a surgical trainee at the Countess of Chester Hospital, was an API working on the ROSSINI2 Trial. Before registering for the scheme, she was apprehensive as she had limited research experience, but she felt that 'this was an ideal opportunity to contribute to the conducting and delivery of a study at the local level, with oversight from an extremely supportive PI'. Once registered as the site API, Nichola played a key role in the local dissemination of the trial, and helped facilitate the Countess of Chester being awarded the Highest Average Monthly Recruiters Award within the trial. Nichola's contribution as the API for ROSSINI2 led to her being awarded the 'Research Rising Star of the Year' at the North West Coast Research and Innovation Awards 2020. She has encouraged her peers to seek out opportunities to take part in the API scheme.

The practicalities of the scheme are described on the NIHR website. In brief, an NIHR portfolio study registers with the scheme and is added to the list of open studies. Potential APIs review the list and contact the PI in their centre of a chosen study. They prospectively complete a registration form, and, once approved as the API, they begin the role.

The API checklist helps guide the activities that should be undertaken during their six-month position. While this checklist is currently in hard-copy form, the administration of the scheme is being integrated onto NIHR Learn; this will provide a single portal for all API appointments, and documentation of progress for APIs. Activities mandated within the API checklist include regular engagement and meetings with the PI and the rest of the site research team. The API's role is not simply to recruit patients; it also

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Associate Principal Investigator (PI) Scheme

The NIHR Associate Principal Investigator (PI) scheme aims to develop junior doctors, nurses and allied health professional to become the PIs of the future at the same time as helping to deliver studies to time and target. Registration is quick and easy, just follow the steps below.

Register study

Check if the study you want to register to be Associate PI for is on the list of registered studies (bit.ly/3bigtuY). If not then complete the Associate PI Scheme Study Registration Form (bit.ly/3hmzpwN)

Register yourself

Register to the scheme by completing the API Scheme Applicant Registration Form (bit.ly/3f3UskE). Once you have approval from the Site PI and CTU Study/Trial Manager

Complete checklist

Once you are registered to the scheme you will be sent a welcome email with a link to the Associate PI Scheme Checklist (bit.ly/3bhLKd) which you need to complete and get signed off by your PI and the CTU Study/Trial Manager within six months of registering to the scheme.

Receive certificate

Once you have submitted your fully signed off checklist the NIHR PI Scheme Team will issue you with a certificate. You are then free to register to another study at the same or another site.

For further information about the scheme, please visit the NIHR PI Scheme at: bit.ly/3uvU7xz
If you have any questions about the scheme, please email the NIHR PI Scheme Team on associatepischeme@nhr.ac.uk

involves disseminating information and awareness about the study through their department, assisting with the administration of the study (such as delegation and screening logs), and helping deal with any local issues.

First opened in general surgical trials, the API scheme was recently approved by the RCoA. While there are only three trials running the scheme at the time of writing (TOPIC2, FLOELA and GAP), more are expected in the coming months. The NIHR recently agreed to central administrative funding to allow the scheme to spread across all specialties. This means that the scheme will soon be open to the whole of the NIHR portfolio.

With the challenges that the NHS faces now and in the coming years, it is imperative that we reopen and expand NIHR portfolio research. This can only be done with local engagement and delivery – the API scheme is central to helping deliver this research now and for future proofing research delivery for the coming years.

Find out more
about the scheme
by visiting the
NIHR website at:
bit.ly/3uvU7xz