

New report helps inform decisions about how science should be funded

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Clinical research has greater societal impact over a 15-20 year timescale, while basic research has greater academic impact, according to a new study from RAND Europe and the Health Economics Research Group (HERG) at Brunel University.

Project Retrosight was a multinational, four-year study that investigated the translation of basic biomedical and clinical cardiovascular and stroke research, and its impact on future work, policy, products and healthcare. The study was based on a rich source of material taken from 29 carefully selected case studies of grants for research conducted in these areas that were awarded 15-20 years ago.

Five key findings from the study are:

- A large and diverse range of impacts arose from the 29 grants studied.
- There are variations between the impacts derived from basic biomedical and clinical research.
- There is no correlation between knowledge production and wider impacts.
- The majority of economic impacts identified come from a minority of projects.



• We identified factors that appear to be associated with high and low impact.

The study was carried out by a consortium of research partners located in Australia, Canada and the UK, led by RAND Europe and HERG. The research used the Payback Framework, which provides a common structure for examining the research funding process and understanding research impact.

The research was led by Steven Wooding, Research Leader at RAND Europe, who said: "The study showed that research is important, that it has real tangible benefits for society and that how you fund it matters. If you want to make a difference to patients over a 15-20 year time-scale, clinical research is more effective. If you want to build knowledge for the longer-term, then basic research is better."

Professor Martin Buxton at HERG added, "Project Retrosight builds on successful methodologies already used to evaluate diabetes and <u>arthritis</u> research funding. We hope its further applications will inform future research funding in more medical disciplines and hence, benefit more patients."

Each of the case studies, on which the research for the project is based, was developed using a range of methods, including structured interviews, document and literature reviews, and bibliometrics. Once the fieldwork was completed, the case studies were systematically rated by an international panel of experts to identify those considered relatively high or low in terms of impact in each payback category.

"Given more opportunities for investment in research than can be supported today, funders need better data and information on which to make important decisions," said Jonathan Grant, President of RAND



Europe and a key member of the project team. "Project Retrosight deepens our knowledge of the 'science of science' to understand what works in research funding."

Professor Dame Sally C. Davies, Director General of Research and Development and Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department of Health and NHS, and Interim Chief Medical Officer, commented, "It is important that research funders support, develop and apply research and analysis to inform their strategic thinking, <u>funding</u> policy and general decision-making. Project Retrosight makes an important contribution to this evidence base."

Provided by RAND Corporation

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