

# NHS pressures at risk of stifling cancer research, says report

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Daily pressures on the NHS are having a serious impact on its ability to support world-leading research into cancer, according to a Cancer Research UK-commissioned report from the University of Birmingham.

The report, led by Hilary Brown of the Health Services Management Centre and based on interviews with clinicians, nurses and administrators involved in NHS clinical [cancer research](#), revealed pockets of excellence in clinical research, but also showed how escalating pressures to deliver routine NHS services are squeezing out time for hospital staff to do vital research.

It also highlights how financial pressures are affecting research infrastructure and the capacity of host organisations to fund additional research costs.

Professor Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician, said: 'The UK has more people taking part in clinical trials in cancer than almost anywhere else in the world, with around a fifth of [cancer patients](#) actively taking part in research. But this report highlights how the ability to deliver that research is limited in many institutions, meaning the NHS's unique capacity for research isn't being fully exploited.

'We've made great progress in treating cancer, with survival rates doubling in the last forty years, so it's vital that our NHS doctors and nurses have enough time to continue the outstanding research that has made this possible.'

In general, respondents said that the capability of the UK to undertake high-quality clinical research was 'exceptional' and 'ahead of the game' compared with other countries. But they also said research suffered because medical staff had too little time, and too few people were trained in how to set up and run trials. Doctors reported that they had to be highly motivated to do research because of the barriers that create much more work on top of their normal jobs.

Pressures on the NHS to deliver routine services are also having an effect on the capacity for clinical research to take place in hospitals, with chemotherapy equipment, pharmacies and radiography constraints all limiting scope for research.

Emma Greenwood, head of policy at Cancer Research UK, said: 'We want to see NHS England make a clear commitment to championing research across the entire health system. This means putting in place a clear strategy to ensure all healthcare bodies provide the capacity and funding to allow [clinical research](#) to take place more widely, so that more cancer patients can reap the benefits of the world-class research taking place around the UK.'

**More information:** The report is available online:  
[www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites ... ient\\_may2015\\_web.pdf](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/2015-05-nhs_pressures_stifling_cancer_research.pdf)

Provided by University of Birmingham

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