

Qualitative research drives participant involvement in the exploration of the new role of Physician Associates in secondary care

The Physician Associate (PA) is a relatively new medical profession in the UK and are new to Norfolk (2018). Anecdotally this role is not being understood by patients and staff. This may be limiting their use, impacting on PA job satisfaction, patient care and threatening their expansion in the region. Using an iterative mixed-methods, case-study approach, this study aims to investigate the nature of the contribution of PAs to collaborative care, and their integration into the Multi-Disciplinary Team in three Norfolk hospital Trusts.

A research strategy was formulated to maximize participant involvement at every stage of the research. Initial consultations with a PA and clinicians in the three Trusts and the literature review informed development of the methodology and research tools.

Questionnaires, which included open-ended questions, have been collected. Field-work is currently on-going, involving in-depth interviews with PAs, their work colleagues and their patients. Interview transcripts will be sent to interviewees for appraisal to further maximize participant involvement. After initial iterative thematic analyses by the researchers, all participants and other stakeholders will be invited to a presentation where findings will be discussed and refined.

Qualitative research is driving the study's participant involvement, but there are benefits and challenges attached to this choice of strategy and research methods; these will be deliberated on the poster.