

Delivering the aims of the Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care: understanding their strategies and contributions

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Plain English summary

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Much of the health research that is produced is not used, and opportunities to improve patient care are missed. In 2008 the UK government funded nine collaborative partnerships between universities and local NHS organisations to address this problem. The Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) were asked to improve links between researchers and NHS managers and clinicians. The underlying idea was that, if NHS staff chose what research was done, it would be more useful to them, and they would use it. However, for this to work they needed to know how research could help them and how to get the research they needed. The CLAHRCs therefore encouraged the two groups to work together to achieve the common goal of getting research better used in practice. They also included patients, in whose interests this was being done.

Our study explored what the CLAHRCs achieved. The CLAHRCs involved a large number of people from different academic disciplines and NHS backgrounds. We found evidence that mutual understanding increased, and that people found the new challenges exciting. The CLAHRCs provided research training and opportunities for people to learn about research, produced peer-reviewed publications and short evidence summaries for NHS staff, and developed a substantial portfolio of completed research projects, which prompted changes in practice locally and across the NHS. These partnerships built credibility and goodwill, and increased the capacity of academics to respond to the needs of the NHS and the service to absorb and act on research.

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