



Brexit: What does it mean for medical research?

Funding – the UK is considered a world leader in medical research, having produced around 25 of the top 100 prescription treatments.¹ The UK currently benefits from access to research funding from EU funding programmes such as Horizon 2020 and the Innovative Medicines Initiative.

Clinical trials – the UK is very successful at conducting clinical trials, sponsoring around 1,500 trials that include other EU countries – half of these will still be occurring in 2019.² Particularly for rare disease trials, it is important to collaborate internationally, as there are not enough patients within one country alone.

Access to new treatments – although the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency regulates medicines in the UK, there is a Europe-wide system of collaboration to approve drugs and ensure safety through the European Medicines Agency. This ensures that one drug can be licenced for the whole of Europe. Europe also cooperates on new medical devices through the Conformité Européene (CE) marking system which confirms that the device conforms to health and safety standards. Both of these ensure efficiency and efficacy of treatments for patients. >>>

What does this mean for patients?

Innovation and progress is not possible without funding, and it can take many years between funding and outcome, so reducing funding now has a negative effect for the future.

The medical research conducted in the UK is world-leading and we know that patients are keen to be part of this – 89% of people said they would be willing to participate in a clinical trial if diagnosed with a condition.³

Without large-scale drug or medical device approval processes the approval of drugs and devices could be delayed, resulting in slower access to new treatments for patients.

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The RCP’s recommendations

- The UK should negotiate continued access to funding, or provide equivalent replacement funding for research so that patients have access to the best care in the future.
- The UK’s exit from the EU must not impact patients’ ability to participate in high-quality research.
- Continued collaboration on drug regulation between the EMA and MHRA to ensure that patients do not experience delays accessing treatments and industry is still incentivised to conduct research in the UK.



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References

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- 2 European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, Brexit Survey Results, 2017. doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.26796.05768.
- 3 NIHR Survey, 2014 <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nine-out-of-ten-people-would-take-part-in-clinical-research/2377>

