

How to ... navigate entry into the field of clinical education research and scholarship

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Abstract

Clinical education research (ClinEdR) is a growing field that aims to ensure the way healthcare professionals are taught and learn is evidence-based. There is growing interest in how this evidence is generated in a robust, timely and cost-effective fashion. In this 'How to ...' paper, we draw on relevant literature and our own experiences to offer suggestions on how novice researchers can navigate entry into the field of ClinEdR. We summarise key resources for those at the earliest stages of their interest in ClinEdR and scholarship and provide personal experiences of networking, collaborating and balancing research with a clinical or teaching role. This paper will be of interest to those at any stage in their clinical career with little to no experience of ClinEdR, but the enthusiasm to get started.

1 | INTRODUCTION

If you are passionate about enhancing the educational experiences of healthcare students, or perhaps a clinical teacher curious about evaluating learning, you might be intrigued by the field of clinical education research (ClinEdR). However, as a relatively new field, and one that is often not introduced early in a clinical career, getting started in the world of ClinEdR can be practically and philosophically challenging. Understanding the methods of educational research, establishing networks with peers and other researchers, generating research ideas and balancing activity with other clinical and training commitments can be problematic.

In this article, we discuss the main challenges and provide practical strategies that can be used to overcome them. Our guidance is informed by literature and our diverse experiences as students, educators and researchers within the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) ClinEdR Incubator faculty. The NIHR Incubator for Clinical Education research is an organisation of enthusiastic

researchers in the field of ClinEdR in the United Kingdom, ranging from complete beginners to experienced professors across the various health professions.

This article accompanies the 'How to ... support others in developing a career in Clinical Education Research' paper, which is for more senior staff who would like to support novice researchers. If you are an undergraduate, you will find information specific to you in another article in this series, 'How to ... interest, involve and inspire undergraduate students in Clinical Education Research'.

1.1 | How to ... build connections in ClinEdR

A significant challenge for early career researchers (ECRs) is lack of mentorship from individuals capable of supporting a research career.^{1,2} Based on personal experience, we know that strong networks and teams are essential at all stages of a research career, particularly when venturing into a new field. Forging connections with near

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work in and beyond your area of interest, using this to clarify your thoughts and using it as a springboard for your own research.

1.4.1 | Attending events

Almost all the special interest organisations outlined in Table 1 host events throughout the year, from large multi-day conferences to webinars and networking sessions. These events also provide opportunities to submit work for presentation, as well as networking. Many events for trainees or ECRs are heavily discounted or free.

When at events, engaging with others' work through asking questions at poster and oral presentations can be a great way to start conversations. It may seem intimidating, but often researchers are very keen to chat about their work and future projects. Through engaging with others' work, and speaking with them about their projects, you may also develop ideas of your own, which may link with work that is already in progress.

1.4.2 | Peer reviewing

Even at an early stage in your research career, your experience of learning can be a valuable perspective to share with authors of research in clinical education. Reviewing the work of others is an excellent introduction to academic writing because it enables you to read research papers submitted to a journal, and where appropriate, provide feedback on how they can be improved before they are accepted for publication. Consider registering as a peer reviewer for relevant journals, such as those outlined in the Table 2a. Many journals now offer the opportunity to complete reviews supported by a mentor. In this scenario, the mentor becomes the corresponding reviewer, and collates the reviews of two to three others, allowing you to discuss and debate with peers in a supported way. Collaborative, or group peer review, is also encouraged and you can reach out to individual journals to request papers if you wish to conduct a group review.

2 | CONCLUSIONS

ClinEdR is an exciting field. For novice researchers, it involves exposure to new research techniques, interacting across specialties and professional background, and generating evidence in an ever-growing discipline. Whilst it is not without its challenges, the authors are wholeheartedly optimistic about the possibilities within the field. We suggest becoming familiar with qualitative research methods, establishing strong networks and mentorship and actively participating in collaborative opportunities. By embracing these strategies, researchers can not only contribute to the advancement of clinical education but also develop valuable skills and forge meaningful connections within the research community. Keep an open mind, remain curious, and embrace all that lies ahead in your research career.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Anna Harvey Bluemel: Conceptualization; writing—original draft; writing—review and editing. **Hannah Gillespie:** Conceptualization; writing—original draft; writing—review and editing. **Aqua Asif:** Conceptualization; writing—review and editing. **Ray Samuriwo:** Conceptualization; writing—review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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