Neonatal Research Priority Setting Partnership: help wanted

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The Neonatal Research Priority Setting Partnership is a national project, currently underway, that aims to identify and prioritise research questions that could be answered in practice-changing clinical trials. In February 2022 over 250 research questions were submitted via an online portal from a wide range of neonatal stakeholders including parents, nurses, allied health professionals, doctors and researchers. These research questions will now be ranked by parents, nurses, allied health professionals, doctors and researchers in a Delphi survey to ensure research reflects the priorities of neonatal stakeholders and inform key research organisations, like the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). We need your help to prioritise these research questions – please get involved with this project and have your voice heard.

Background

One in seven newborn infants will require neonatal care,[1] but there is wide variation in practice[2] and an incomplete evidence base for many commonly used treatments.[3] The gold standard for assessing the effectiveness of a healthcare intervention is a methodologically robust randomised controlled trial.[4] With such a wide range of treatment uncertainties it is well recognised that research prioritisation has an important role, and such prioritisation processes have been previously undertaken in the fields of preterm birth,[5,6] stillbirth,[7] diabetes in pregnancy[8] and pregnancy hypertension.[9] Such projects have been important in identifying broad topics of research interest, but these have often not been amenable to testing in practice-changing clinical trials. This project aims to focus on more detailed research questions that are testable in clinical trials, and hence invites submissions in a population, intervention, comparison, outcome (PICO) format.

Aims and methods

Research should strive to be relevant to the population it serves, and therefore a steering group was formed that encompasses parents, patients, healthcare professionals and researchers (**TABLE 1**). The steering group agreed on the scope of the project and has played a valuable role in ensuring research questions have been submitted by diverse stakeholders. This project is divided

Steering group member	Role and affiliation
Cheryl Battersby	Academic Neonatologist, BAPM Data/Informatics Lead and member of NIHR prioritisation committee
James Boardman	Professor of Neonatal Medicine and immediate past President of the Neonatal Society
Elaine Boyle	Professor of Neonatal Medicine, Chair of the NIHR Neonatal Clinical Studies Group and a representative on the NIHR Children's Clinical Research Network
William Carroll	Consultant Paediatrician and RCPCH officer for Research
Jon Dorling	Professor of Paediatrics, Neonatal Consultant and BAPM Research Lead
Kate Dinwiddy	BAPM Chief Executive
Katie Evans	Project Co-ordinator and Clinical Research Fellow in Neonatal Medicine
Chris Gale	Academic Neonatologist and Neonatal Society Meeting Secretary
Katie Gallagher	Academic Neonatal Nurse and Neonatal Nurses Association representative
Pollyanna Hardy	Clinical Trials Statistician and Director of National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit
Emma Johnston	Parent representative and Parents and Family Engagement Lead with the Thames Valley and Wessex ODN
Helen Mactier	Neonatal Consultant and President of BAPM
Claire Marcroft	Neonatal Physiotherapist and allied health professionals representative
James Webbe	Trainee representative and Neonatal Medicine Grid Trainee

TABLE 1 Steering group members. Key: BAPM=British Association of Perinatal Medicine; NIHR=National Institute for Health Research; RCPCH= Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health; ODN=operational delivery network.

into four stages (**FIGURE 1**) encompassing question identification, question ratification, a prioritisation process and dissemination of a ranked list of PICO questions. The ultimate goal is to disseminate a list of prioritised neonatal research questions that can inform the development and design of practice-changing neonatal trials within the UK.
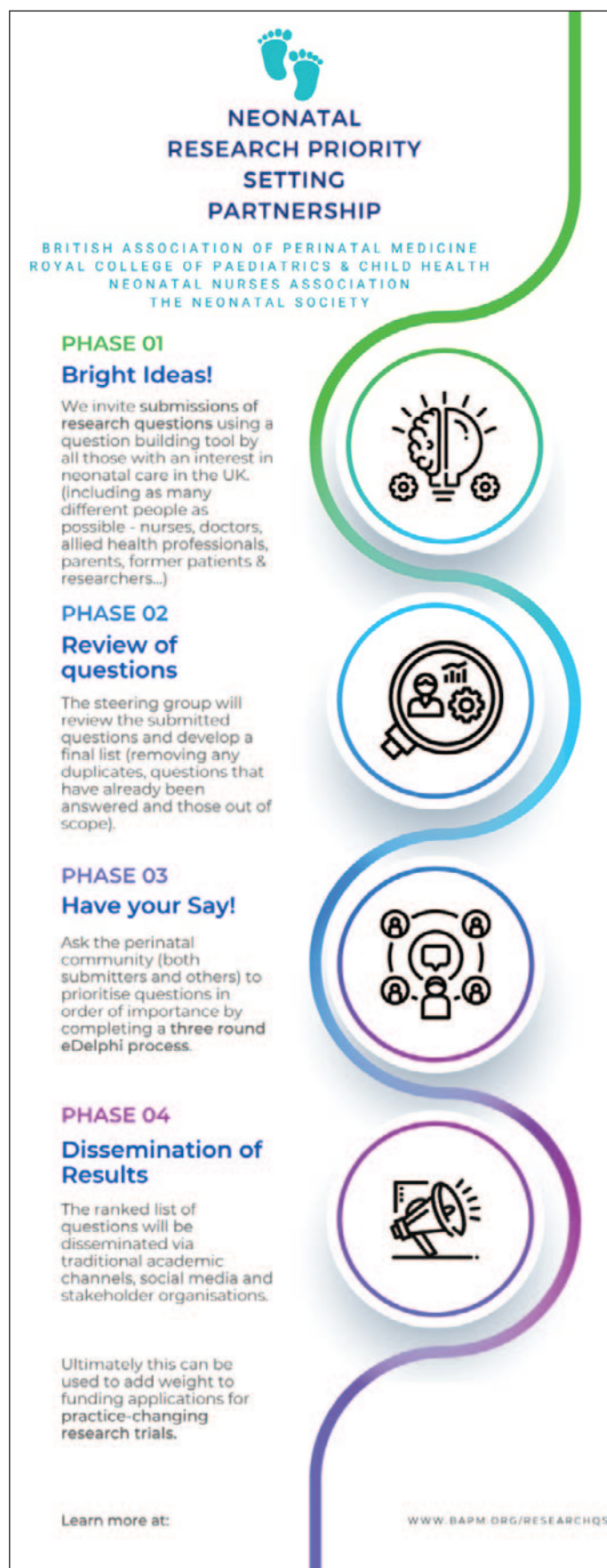
Current progress

Throughout February 2022 the project was widely publicised, and over 250 research questions were submitted by a wide range of stakeholders. A question building tool assisted submission of questions using the PICO structure. With the support of the British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM), targeted webinars were run to further support both parents, ex-neonatal patients and clinicians with developing a PICO question. Submitted questions spanned a wide range of topics including common clinical practice variations, nutrition strategies, novel medications and family-integrated care initiatives. Over half of all submitted questions have come from stakeholders who do not identify as doctors, highlighting the involvement of a wide range of different groups, and moving forward we are particularly keen to diversify further.

How to get involved

The next stage of this process is prioritising the submitted research questions – this is critical and allows health professionals like you, to inform what research questions are important and should be addressed in clinical trials. We would welcome anyone with an interest in neonatal care to get involved with the Neonatal Research Priority Setting Partnership. It will be simple to participate through an online Delphi survey where you will be asked to score research questions on their importance to you. During the first round of this two-round process, there will be the opportunity for you to submit new research questions that would then be prioritised in subsequent rounds.

References

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NEONATAL RESEARCH PRIORITY SETTING PARTNERSHIP

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF PERINATAL MEDICINE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF PAEDIATRICS & CHILD HEALTH
NEONATAL NURSES ASSOCIATION
THE NEONATAL SOCIETY

PHASE 01

Bright Ideas!

We invite submissions of research questions using a question building tool by all those with an interest in neonatal care in the UK. (including as many different people as possible - nurses, doctors, allied health professionals, parents, former patients & researchers...)

PHASE 02

Review of questions

The steering group will review the submitted questions and develop a final list (removing any duplicates, questions that have already been answered and those out of scope).

PHASE 03

Have your Say!

Ask the perinatal community (both submitters and others) to prioritise questions in order of importance by completing a **three round** eDelphi process.

PHASE 04

Dissemination of Results

The ranked list of questions will be disseminated via traditional academic channels, social media and stakeholder organisations.

Ultimately this can be used to add weight to funding applications for practice-changing research trials.

Learn more at: WWW.BAPM.ORG/RESEARCHQS

FIGURE 1 The project is divided into four stages encompassing question identification, question ratification, a prioritisation process and dissemination of results.

For full details of how to get involved and to sign up go to www.bapm.org/researchqs