

International HIV knowledge exchange

A HIV rehabilitation research collaborative has recently been established at international meeting. **Will Chegwiddden** reports

St Bartholomew's Hospital in London was recently the venue for an international meeting of stakeholders in HIV and rehabilitation research.

Financed by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), the event was the next step in a process that started when a contingent of OTs and physiotherapists from the UK first met members of the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR) at the International AIDS Society Conference in Toronto in 2006.

The meeting drew together health professionals, individuals living with HIV, academics and researchers from both the UK and Canada. The meeting was held over three days in London and the UK attendees were joined by five visiting Canadians in person and a larger group via teleconferencing facilities.

Some of the Canadian participants included senior academic staff from McMaster, Dalhousie and Toronto Universities in Canada. The UK was

represented by NHS research staff and academic staff from Queen Mary University and Brunel University. OTs were recruited through the College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section – HIV, Oncology and Palliative Care, and physiotherapists from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy's HIV clinical interest group.

The meeting was also very much enriched by the attendance and lively input of several individuals living with HIV, from both countries.

This was the first time such an event has been held and is a response to the fact that there is very little published research relating to HIV and rehabilitation, particularly since the advent of effective antiretroviral treatment in the mid 1990s.

Since that time, the way in which therapy and rehabilitation services are provided to individuals living with HIV had changed dramatically, with HIV now conceptualised as a long-term, episodic disability. Previous work has led to the development of research frameworks and

the identification of major research themes in this field (O'Brien *et al* 2008).

This meeting was the next step in operationalising these frameworks and establishing actual research projects.

The first day of the meeting consisted of a knowledge exchange and transfer, with each country presenting on the current state of health and social care services in their home country, and then overviews of HIV and rehabilitation services, education and research. Canada has a history of having more a more structured and evolved HIV education and research programme, while in the UK, we have many more specialist HIV rehabilitation services.

The second and third days were aimed at developing research questions that could be taken forward. The initial research questions agreed on relate to investigating the models of HIV rehabilitation service delivery in both countries, as well as issues relating to the extent and access to these services.

A 'research question bank' was also established to start identifying other questions that are priority to answer; these included topics such efficacy of cognitive assessment and rehabilitation in HIV associated neurocognitive disorders, HIV and the older adult, and exercise and HIV.

The meeting has now established the Canada-UK HIV Rehabilitation Research Collaborative (CUHRRRC). The collaborative has made plans to continue to meet and work together to take forward the work started at this meeting.

The meeting was generously supported by a CIHR grant, individual bursaries in Canada and Tower Hamlets Community Health Services and Barts and the London NHS Trust, the local host organisations.

Reference

O'Brien K, Wilkins A, Zack E, Solomon P and Chegwiddden W (2008) *Informing future research and best practices in HIV and rehabilitation: research priorities and guiding principles for the development of best practice guidelines*. AIDS 2008 – XVII International AIDS Conference: Abstract no. MOPE0616

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