Title: Ensuring value in health-related research

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Funders of health-related research agree that, while there is considerable research of high value, any amount of research lost because it asks the wrong questions, is poorly designed, is not published or the reports are unusable is unacceptable.

Important international initiatives working towards reducing waste in clinical research have been established, such as: the AllTrials Campaign1, which calls for all past and present clinical trials to be registered and their full methods and summary results reported; the EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUAlity and Transparency Of health Research) Network2, which develops and hosts reporting guidelines and runs courses on better reporting; and the Evidence-Based Research Network3, which aims to reduce waste by advocating no new studies are funded without a prior systematic review of existing evidence, as well as efficient production, update and dissemination of systematic reviews.

*The* *Lancet*’s REWARD (REduce research Waste And Reward Diligence) Campaign4 invites everyone involved in research to critically examine the way they work to reduce waste and maximise efficiency. REWARD is particularly influential and relevant for health research funders, because it captures the proposed Recommendations for Action to increase value and reduce waste in biomedical and public health research identified in a 2014 *Lancet* Series5-9 that looked in detail at the sources of waste and inefficiency first highlighted by Chalmers and Glasziou in 200910.

Although funders are striving to improve the value of the funds invested in the research we commission, deliver, publish and implement, a recent survey shows we can do better.11 International funders of health-related research who are interested in exchanging ideas prompted by recommendations made in the 2014 *Lancet* series are coming together at meetings instigated by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR, UK), the Patient-Centred Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI, US) and the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw). Our goal is to provide explicit examples to help funders with their priorities and actions in maximising research value.

We meet two times a year, and the June 2017 Ensuring Value in Research (EViR) Funders’ Collaboration and Development Forum meeting culminated in our consensus statement:

*As organisations that fund health-related research, represent funders, or set funding policy, we believe that we have a responsibility not just to seek to advance knowledge, but also to advance the practices of health-related research and research funding.  Therefore, we commit to working together and with our respective research communities to share current and develop new approaches to increase the value of health-related research. We commit to transparency in this process, including evaluating our progress and the impact of our efforts. This will contribute to improvement in the health and lives of all peoples, everywhere.*

*Along with other relevant activity in the wider research landscape (e.g., the REWARD statement), we understand that as funders we will maximise the value of research we fund when:*

* *we set justifiable research priorities;*
* *we require robust research design, conduct and analysis;*
* *we seek to ensure that research regulation and management are proportionate to risks;*
* *we seek to ensure that complete information on research methods and findings from studies is accessible and usable*

*Increasing value will require collaborative efforts among funders, regulators, commercial organisations, publishers, editors, researchers, research organisations, research users and others.*

Our statement specifically covers health-related research: clinical, public health and health services delivery research. While we believe this is relevant and interesting to other areas, such as pre-clinical research for example, this is not our main focus.

The statement confirms our commitment to work together and with our respective research communities to share current and develop new approaches to reduce waste and increase the value of research. The resolve behind this statement is not our complete solution to the problem of wasted research, just the start.

The Forum has also agreed Guiding Principles that underpin our consensus statement. Examples of how we realise all of the principles will be different for different funders. We know what we need to do to meet some of them and so the Forum is an opportunity to share good practice. However, other principles have no clear solutions, so the Forum will allow us to exchange ideas about the work we still have to do to maximise the quality and reporting of research evidence. We intend to publish the principles and examples of how different funders meet them.

Health and Care Research Wales is hosting the Spring 2018 meeting of the Forum in Cardiff, UK. Plans for the meeting include a workshop on funder practices for ensuring robust research design, conduct and analysis.

We hope other organisations want to be involved in the Forum, so if you would like any further information about our work, or if your organisation is interested in joining the Forum, please contact addingvalueinresearch@nihr.ac.uk.

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Author contributions

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* KD, BvdL, EW, and MW reviewed and edited iterations of the manuscript.
* All authors have approved the final version.

Declaration of interests

* FC has nothing to disclose.
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