Launch of the BANCC Research forum-championing cardiovascular nurse researchers

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On Nov 19/11/2020 British Association for Nursing in Cardiovascular Care (BANCC) ([www.bancc.org.uk](http://www.bancc.org.uk)) held a free virtual cardiovascular nurse researcher forum for members hosted by the British Heart Foundation-Clinical Research Collaborative (BHF-CRC).

The BANCC president, Liz Williams, welcomed and challenged all attendees to make this research forum and using it a priority to promote, celebrate and share research fellowships, opportunities and achievements of nurse researchers within the greater BANCC community.

Allyson Arnold (@AllysonBHFCRC), COO of the BHF-CRC, shared the highlights of their research strategy ([www.bhfcrc.org](http://www.bhfcrc.org)). Ultimately their aim is to support and develop cardiovascular research to result in the highest quality of research with an impact on international cardiovascular practice. They exist to support all cardiovascular societies and aim to partner their members to Clinical Trials Units (CTUs) and other supportive research partners to form a collaborative network of research groups. They aim to have an inclusive approach to research, including nurse researchers, regardless of funding streams within cardiology. One of the goals of the BHF-CRC, gives BANCC and the new research forum the greatest potential to grow as a newly formed group as they look to engage with a broader research community; to develop future researchers by providing valuable services to formulate the relevant research questions to conduct high impact clinical research studies. The BANCC research forum could provide the platform to, “create cross-cultural research projects to catch the patient groups and clinical issues which ‘fall between’ existing groups” (Barbara Farquharson, Research Fellow, University of Stirling, @bfarq1). However, currently existing cardiovascular groups do not have enough nurse representation.

Professor Christi Deaton (@CNRGcam), Florence Nightingale Foundation Chair of Clinical Nursing Research at the University of Cambridge, then set the stage for a lively group discussion by painting a picture of the current landscape of cardiovascular nursing research. To be blunt, there is much room for improvement-while there is robust cardiovascular research performed in the UK, nursing research is under-represented within the cardiology research portfolio. She shared with us figures from UK survey of research fellowships which highlighted how few nurses pursue PhD, in comparison to other health professionals and that there is a real drop off in those who do complete PhD’s progressing into independent established researchers(Medical Research Council 2017). While research training opportunities exist, there is a need to support nurse researchers across their career trajectories and make research integral to nursing practice. Nurse researchers in cardiology need to be encouraged, mentored, and acknowledged. She finished by challenging the BANCC forum, “What should BANCC do to support existing cardiovascular nurse researchers?”

The forum then became a lively discussion between multiple BANCC members and attendees of this forum. Three main themes that arose.

*Nurse Research Leaders and where to find them?* While is this particularly true in cardiovascular nurse research, it is generically true in nursing, with nurse researchers under-represented amongst allied health researchers (i.e. physiotherapists, pharmacists, etc…) (Medical Research Council 2017). Attendees suggested creating a list of researchers in cardiology, but this had been tried previously without success. Many BANCC members highlighted that for mentorship and supervision that finding someone with the right skills to go with a given research project is more important than a mentor within a given clinical professional group. However, certain funders and Universities do require a nurse doing a PhD has a nurse supervisor. Furthermore, there is the need to support those in training programmes to be developed into independent nurse researchers. This led to the question to all cardiovascular nurse researchers nationally; “Are you visible beyond your research group?” To early career researchers and aspiring nurse researchers, to quote Professor Christi Deaton, “Be relentless and find someone who will challenge you and your development, be bold, do clinical trials, don’t be afraid to be a research nurse leader.”

*Cardiovascular nurse research mentorship:* Leading on from this the BANCC has plans to build more mentorship in their programs including research using the advantage of virtual platforms to increase accessibility to training and mentorship to all aspiring cardiovascular nurse researchers. In addition to the identification of these mentors there is also a need for current cardiovascular nurse researchers to publish and share their stories of the convoluted pathway they followed to get to their career in research highlighting their challenges and achievements; “Failure is inevitable in research, so you need to be comfortable with it” (Ian Jones, Professor of Nursing, Liverpool John Moores University, @ProfIanJones). While papers and publications will help to do this; Rosalynn Austin (PhD candidate, @RosalynnAustin) also raised that nursing has much to learn from how other health professionals who use social media to support, celebrate and network between their researchers (e.g. virtual workspace, tweet chats, blogs, podcasts, etc).

*Which pathway is the right one?* Differences between professional doctorate, PhD’s, and clinical academic roles were highlighted and the need to mentors to have open and honest discussion with aspiring researchers as to which is the right pathway for them. A professional doctorate leads more to clinical expert with interest in research; PhD’s become research experts, and a clinical academic as somewhere in between both clinical and research expertise. Nationally, a momentum is growing around research (Bueser 2019). The CQC now evaluates an NHS trust’s performance in research (NIHR 2019) and the pandemic has put research regularly in the evening news, likely raising the public’s awareness of research. BANCC and this research forum have responsibility to their members to connect with other health researchers to provide opportunity and promote the cardiovascular nurse researchers we have already, adopting the BHF-CRC theme of inclusivity and working together to produce effective research projects. Helping current and aspiring cardiovascular nurse researcher and to work with the CNO of England to promote and engage senior NHS trust leadership in supporting nurse researchers (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/nursingmidwifery/research-and-evidence/>). These different roles and pathways mean that there is greater opportunity for nurses who embark on different pathways to collaborate highlighting each other’s strengths.

The first steps to supporting and developing cardiovascular nurse researchers has already been taken by the creation of this research forum support by the BANCC. A working group will be organised to investigate the possibility of holding virtual meetings to provide a combination of training, mentorship, and highlighting members’ achievements. If you would like to join the BANCC research forum and shape the future of cardiovascular nurse researchers please email: tootie.bueser@nhs.net, @2tbueser

References

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