**Research on Research Registry and hub: promoting practices that improve the way we do science**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background**

Research on research (RoR), referred also as metascience, critically examines research practice. The rapid growth of RoR evidence highlights the need for funders and research organisations to work collaboratively to increase sharing evidence, decrease risk of duplication and research waste, and ultimately lead to better implementation of research. To address these needs, the RoR registry and community hub was established in 2021 to bring together national and international RoR communities and thus strengthen the impact of this evolving discipline within the broader research ecosystem. The RoR registry and hub facilitates collaborative efforts among stakeholders dedicated to refining research practices. It aims to enhance the visibility of RoR studies, thus enabling the formation of research partnerships and promoting effective dissemination of evidence. This paper provides a comprehensive account of the registry's development and outlines the strategic activities implemented to drive its adoption within the research community.

**Methods**

We utilised multiple methods to develop, grow and maintain the RoR registry. These consist of: a review of registries; creation of an advisory group; development of a web-based online registry of projects; conducting an online survey one year after launch to evaluate the performance of the RoR registry and hub; running two online events to first launch the registry and to showcase research registered on the platform; establishing Chatter sessions (online webinars on research on research topics); dissemination activities to promote the registry through publications and collaborations with publishers; and generating materials throughout the time the registry has been operating that reach multiple audiences.

**Results**

The development of the registry took place between January 2020 and June 2021. The scope of registries that were available at the time informed the contents of the registry and especially, the questions that are asked at registration, ensuring a useful and still pragmatic mechanism to register work. An advisory board of experts provided strategic advice during the development phase. In parallel, a brand concept for the RoR registry and RoR team was co-developed. A video to explain the aim of the registry was co-created with a science communicator. An online launch event for the RoR registry and hub in June 2021 announced the registry to relevant communities (ror-hub.org) where a panel of experts discussed research on research and the role of this activity in the research ecosystem. A series of online webinars (Chatter sessions) were set up after the launch event where presenters led a discussion on topics of interest to the community, invited reflection and encouraged adoption of evidence to improve practice. The online evaluation survey of the registry and chatter sessions asked communities of interest about usefulness of the registry, benefits and challenges to engaging with the website and ways to increase its uptake. Forty-seven responses to the online survey were received. Five themes extracted through thematic analysis were: 1: Chatter sessions (two subthemes: management and topic coverage) 2: Registry outputs 3: Opportunities for improvement and collaboration 4: Promoting the registry 5: Reasons for not interacting with the registry. Findings of the evaluation highlighted the need for clearer communication about Chatter sessions with more notice and post-session materials, as well as more diverse topics like AI and bias in research. Members suggested improvements to the registry itself, including better promotion, simpler study entry, and more engaging content like mini blogs to encourage wider use. Finally, while many members found the registry through word-of-mouth, lack of time and awareness were cited as the main barriers to having greater interaction.

In May 2024, the RoR team organised an online research festival, ‘AI and research: a promising relationship?’, to celebrate the registry's first three years. The festival included a panel discussion on the role of artificial intelligence in research, including whether AI could reduce research bureaucracy and how AI could impact on research integrity and presentations from projects added to the registry. 107 participants from organisations in 28 countries, including research funders, universities, charities, hospitals and publishers worldwide logged on to the festival sessions, provided highly positive feedback on the relevance and usefulness of the topics discussed, the discussion and presentations.

**Reflections**

This paper presents the development of the RoR registry and community hub, describing the process from initial idea to launch, subsequent evaluation and continuous dissemination to encourage its use for best research practices. The highlights of the virtual research festival hosted by the RoR team, which focused on the intersection of AI and research, showed the multiple ways in which the community around the registry has been established and how it is contributing to the research ecosystem. The next steps for the registry and hub include expansion of the registry by partnering with organisations conducting research on research activity; developing strategies to attract more users to the registry; and encourage active participation within the community hub, targeting outreach and continuously analysing the impact by tracking collaborations, measuring changes in research quality, or surveying users to gather feedback on the platform's effectiveness.

**Keywords:** research on research; registries; science on science; meta-science; transparency; research waste

**BACKGROUND**

Increased pressure on research funders to deliver benefits from research and reduce burden to stakeholders in the research ecosystem have led to a rapid growth in the number of studies focused on improving research processes, effectively, a growth of the research on research or metascience discipline (Guthrie et al., 2019; Ioannidis et al., 2015; Treweek et al., 2015; Treweek et al., 2018). However, this increase of research on research (RoR) activity has occurred in silos, generating duplication and undermining evidence comparability which leads to a "waste of research effort" (Williams, 2022). This also affects research on research as a discipline that encourages collaboration, transparency and efficiencies in the research ecosystem.

Solutions to organise research on research activity have shown success. Research registries like PROSPERO (Booth et al., 2012, 2013), the Open Science Framework (OSF) Registries (Foster & Deardorff, 2017), and ClinicalTrials.gov (Zarin et al., 2011) have significantly enhanced research quality by promoting transparency, reducing bias, and facilitating collaboration. Pre-registration of research in platforms like PROSPERO helps to prevent selective reporting and publication bias, ensuring that all research findings, regardless of outcome, are made available (Chalmers et al., 2013). Platforms like the Open Science Framework provide avenues for researchers to publish analysis plans, promoting openness and collaboration (West, 2020). In addition, platforms like F1000Research Research on Research, Policy & Culture Gateway (F1000 Research Gateways, 2025) or MetaROR (MetaROR, 2025) are contributing to increasing visibility of published work in the metascience space, addressing some of the challenges faced by research on research activity such as a lack of dedicated publishing venues and difficulties in finding funding to share research outputs with open access licenses.

Despite the progress made in developing and implementing open science practices, there is still room for improvement. One area where more work is needed is in the registration of metascience research. Registration of research is essential for ensuring transparency and reproducibility of research findings, and it can also help to reduce duplication of research efforts. Registration or pre-registration of studies has shown to support increased transparency of research (Adelson et al., 2019; West, 2020) which in turn enhances the credibility and impact of research (Wilkinson et al., 2016). In addition, sharing research openly has the potential to accelerate knowledge exchange and collaboration between researchers and practitioners, leading to innovation and reduced duplication. Importantly, there is evidence that registration of studies and analysis plans enhance the quality of research (Sideri et al., 2018) as defined by:

* Greater transparency in the execution and reporting of studies (The PLOS Medicine Editors, 2015).
* Prevention of selective reporting of outcomes in prospective registration (Dal-Ré & Marušić, 2016).
* Access of study design to diverse stakeholders’ groups (Boaz et al., 2018).
* Identification of studies to avoid unnecessary duplication of research work (Glasziou & Chalmers, 2017).
* Encouragement of compliance with reporting guidelines (e.g., PRISMA statement for systematic reviews or EQUATOR reporting guidelines) (Moher, 2018).
* Reduction of reporting biases with deviation from the original protocol (Bradley et al., 2020).
* Improved study design and methodology through feedback from the registration process (Page et al., 2018).

The aim of this project was to create a registry of research on research activity. The registry was designed to strengthen collaborations amongst researchers by providing a space to share their work, increase mobilisation of research evidence creating a mechanism to connect and increase the visibility of work in this area, supporting transparency and decreasing waste. This paper presents the development of the research on research registry and hub (<http://ror-hub.org>), mechanisms for uptake and efforts to continue the growth of the registry and hub community.

**METHODS AND RESULTS**

This section outlines the strategic activities, practical steps, and collaborative efforts undertaken by the research on research (RoR) team in developing, delivering, and sustaining the RoR registry and hub. We describe how the initiative evolved from concept to implementation, including partnerships, community engagement, promotional efforts, and evaluation to track growth and impact. Multiple methods were used in the design and delivery of the RoR registry. The outputs and activities described in this section explain the steps to date in creating and delivering the registry.

**The RoR team**

The project was designed and delivered by the RoR team at the School of Healthcare Enterprise and Innovation, University of Southampton. It initially received a grant from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton and was supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre; NETSCC). The project has subsequently received two more grants, funded by the Faculty of Medicine’s Research England Enhancing Research Culture funding.

1. **Scope of existing registries**

We carried out a rapid scope of existing registries to learn from the experiences of setting up and maintaining a registry, as well as building an international reputation. There was also interest in learning what information was essential in registering research or projects and the ways in which the information was presented and shared. PROSPERO, ISRCTN, WHO International Clinical Trials Registry Platform, preclinicaltrials.eu, and Open Science Framework (OSF) were reviewed in the second half of 2020. Table 1 shows the list of registries reviewed with a brief description of the resource. Key phrases used to search for registries descriptions included research on research, meta science, science on science, accessibility, research transparency and research collaboration.

Table 1: Highlights of registries reviewed during the development phase of the RoR registry and hub

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource** | **Description** |
| Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR)http://www.anzctr.org.au/ | ANZCTR is an online register of clinical trials being undertaken in Australia and New Zealand. It is the only Primary Registry in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Registry Network in Australia and New Zealand which means that it fulfils certain criteria for content, quality and validity, accessibility, unique identification, technical capacity and administration.The ANZCTR includes trials from the full spectrum of therapeutic areas of pharmaceuticals, surgical procedures, preventive measures, lifestyle, devices, treatment and rehabilitation strategies and complementary therapies.The ANZCTR is an online public registry of clinical trials, held at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre, University of Sydney.  |
| ClinicalTrials.govhttp://clinicaltrials.gov | Primarily known as a registry of interventional studies, clincialtrials.gov also covers observational studies. It contains over 250,000 studies with locations in all 50 States and in 200 countries.ClinicalTrials.gov results database was launched in September 2008 to implement Section 801 of the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act of 2007, which requires the submission of ‘basic results’ for certain clinical trials, generally no later than 1 year after their completion date. Results information for registered and completed studies is submitted by the study sponsor or principal investigator in a standard, tabular format without discussions or conclusions. ClinicalTrials.gov staff review results submissions to ensure that they are clear and informative before posting them to the Web site. However, ClinicalTrials.gov cannot ensure scientific accuracy. Study sponsors or Principal Investigators as data providers are responsible for ensuring that their submitted information is accurate and complete. |
| Cochrane Library (For protocols and pre-protocols)https://www.cochranelibrary.com | The Cochrane Library is a collection of databases that contain high-quality, independent evidence to inform healthcare decision-making. The Cochrane Library is owned by [Cochrane](http://www.cochrane.org/) and published by [Wiley](http://www.wiley.com/).The Cochrane Library consists of a collection of six databases that contain different types of high-quality, independent evidence.* Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
* Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials
* Cochrane Methodology Register
* Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects
* Health Technology Assessment Database
* NHS Economic Evaluation Database
 |
| Health Services Research Projects in Progress (HSRProj)-discontinued<https://academyhealth.org/about/programs/hsrproj#:~:text=The%20HSRProj%20(Health%20Services%20Research,private%20organizations%2C%20and%20international%20organizations>.  | HSRProj was a database of citations to research-in-progress funded by federal and foundation grants and contracts. HSRProj was built upon a database developed in prototype by staff of AcademyHealth and the Cecil Sheps Center at the University of North Carolina with funding from the Pew Charitable Trust. It included over 32,000 citations to ongoing or recently completed research funded since 2000.HSRProjcontains more than 38,000 archived, recently completed and ongoing projects funded by more than 370 agencies.HSRProj could be used to identify:* The most up-to-date information on ongoing projects in the field;
* Individuals conducting cutting-edge health services research;
* Colleagues who may be interested in collaborating or discussing the policy implications of a given area of research;
* Government agencies, private organizations, and foundations funding health services research; and,
* Specific ongoing health services research projects, such as racial disparities in health care, medical errors/patient safety, small area analysis, etc.

HSRProj was discontinued in September 2021 <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/databases/download/hsrproj.html> |
| Pan African Clinical Trial Registry (PACTR)<https://pactr.samrc.ac.za>  | The Pan African Clinical Trials Registry (PACTR) aims to increase clinical trial registration in Africa by developing awareness of the need to register trials and supporting trialists during registration. Trials may be registered manually by email, postal mail, or facsimile correspondence and trial registration is free.The PACTR is the first WHO-recognised clinical trials registry in Africa. PACTR aims to be a comprehensive database of planned, ongoing or completed clinical trials in Africa. It also provides accessible information that describes the scope, location, ethics and funding patterns of trials conducted across Africa.The PACTR registry facilitates understanding of regional research patterns, enables the identification of research gaps for future studies, and facilitates the investigation of the scope, quality and funding patterns of African trials. |
| PreclinicalTrials.euhttps://www.preclinicaltrials.eu/ | PreclinicalTrials is an online register of protocols for preclinical animal studies conducted around the world.Preclinicaltrials.eu aims to provide a comprehensive overview of all animal studies, including those that might otherwise remain unpublished. The registry aims to:* Increase transparency
* Avoid unnecessary duplication of animal studies
* Reduce reporting bias, such as publication bias and bias induced by selective outcome reporting, p-hacking and hypothesising after the results are known (HARKing)
* Increase data sharing, by:
* allowing fellow researchers and reviewers to access information on the study design, which is often lacking in publications
* provide a platform to share details and data of otherwise unpublished animal studies
* Create opportunities for collaborative research
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| PROSPERO – International prospective register of systematic reviews https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/ | PROSPERO includes protocol details for systematic reviews relevant to health and social care, welfare, public health, education, crime, justice, and international development, where there is a health-related outcome. Systematic review protocols on PROSPERO can include any type of study design.PROSPERO aims to provide a comprehensive listing of systematic reviews registered at inception to help avoid duplication and reduce the opportunity for reporting bias by enabling comparison of the completed review with what was planned in the protocol. PROSPERO is produced by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) and funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). |
| ResearchRegistry.comwww.researchregistry.com | The Research Registry is a one-stop shop for registering all types of research studies, from ‘first in man’ case reports to observational/interventional studies to systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The process is easy, simple, and takes less than five minutes. The registry will not only register research prospectively (as is best practice) but also retrospectively. If a study is not prospectively registered, subsequently performed and then rejected by a journal, and not published, no record of the study will exist. The Research Registry aims to address this by allowing retrospective registration for studies not prospectively registered prior to recruitment of the first participant and which have not yet been published in a journal. The Research Registry will also record negative studies and studies where the outcome may be suboptimal.  |
| SWAT and SWAR Repository Storeshttps://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/TheNorthernIrelandNetworkforTrialsMethodologyResearch/SWATSWARInformation/ | Studies Within a Trial (SWAT) and Studies Within a Review (SWAR) are studies that are embedded within a main study. They will use experimental methods, e.g., a randomised control trial, to determine ways to improve the delivery of studies like the main trial they are embedded within.<https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/TheNorthernIrelandNetworkforTrialsMethodologyResearch/SWATSWARInformation/> The specific aims of the Network are:1. To develop excellence in specific areas of methodology research to influence the quality, relevance and impact of trials in Northern Ireland, the UK, Ireland and internationally. We will emphasise expertise that has already been brought together in the Network: in particular the public health and critical care (Queen's University) and chronic conditions and mental health (University of Ulster).
2. To strengthen capacity in novel methodologies for trials spanning a complex range of intervention types, with an emphasis on improving the quality of research and thereby improving practice and health outcomes.
3. To identify effective means for presenting trial findings, including the use of social media.
 |
| The International Traditional Medicine Clinical Trial (ISRCTN) Registryhttp://www.isrctn.com/ | The ISCRTN registry is a primary clinical trial registry recognised by WHO and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) that accepts all clinical research studies, providing content validation and curation and the unique identification number necessary for publication. All study records in the registry are freely accessible and searchable. ISRCTN supports transparency in clinical research, helps reduce selective reporting of results and ensures an unbiased and complete evidence base. The ISCRTN registry accepts all studies involving human subjects or populations with outcome measures assessing effects on human health and well-being, including studies in healthcare, social care, education, workplace safety and economic development.  |
| Registry for Research on the Responsible Conduct of Researchhttps://osf.io/jbqkv/ | A Registry for Research on the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is designed to enable researchers to share information on six key aspects of RCR research: Problem, Impact, Intervention, Hypothesis, Assessment and Data sharing.With the adoption of the Amsterdam Agenda at the 5th World Conference on Research Integrity (https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/amsterdam-agenda) the World Conferences on Research Integrity committed to establishing a Registry for Research on the Responsible Conduct of Research (RRRCR). The primary goal of RRRCR is to improve the quality of research on the responsible conduct of research by making it goals, methods and assessment more transparent. |

1. **Advisory group of leaders in the RoR space**

We invited RoR leaders to be part of an advisory group and collaborate in the project. Experts affiliated with national and international universities, funding organisations and groups who have developed specialised registries and initiatives that support the aims of the registry were invited to be part of an advisory group to support the development and delivery of the project. Affiliations of the group of advisors were: the University of York, PROSPERO, RAND Europe, University of Cambridge, Trial Forge, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Wellcome, Research on Research Institute (RoRI), The Health Foundation, NIHR Coordinating Centre. Collectively, the group shared their experience in developing registries, forming and growing communities of interest, developing areas of research on research, conducting relevant interventions, and overall, leading the way in how research practice can be improved. The group provided advice, guidance and support during the development and launch event of the registry and after publication of the registry, the membership was updated to include other organisations that represent areas that can be informed by research on research activity. As such, the group invited new members to have representation from early career researchers and the Health Research Authority (HRA). The advisory group continue to work in collaboration on activities to support the RoR registry which is now focused on advising on the uptake of the registry by research, policy or other relevant communities.

1. **Development of brand concept for the RoR registry and RoR team**

With continuous technical assistance from the University of Southampton's IT infrastructure team, we created the RoR registry and community hub website in collaboration with an external software engineer, a science communicator and a community of interest including researchers, funding organisations and evaluators. In order to support user engagement through a clear and polished visual presence, we collaborated with the University's print design team to develop the registry's visual identity, which includes the logo and related design components.

1. **Promotional video**

A 90-second animated promotional video was commissioned to improve outreach and communication, and it may be found on the RoR webpage (<https://youtu.be/BEdqNUxM1z0>). The video, produced in collaboration with ScienceSplained, a business that specialises in scientific animation, provides a concise overview of the RoR registry's goals, the benefits of project registration and how to access the registry. The promotional video was an innovative mechanism to reach wider audiences to promote the registry in clear and engaging ways, and has generated highly positive feedback from diverse groups, including researchers and funding organisations.

1. **Online launch event for ROR registry and hub**

The outputs of the activity described in sections i-iv completed the development of the RoR registry and hub (http://ror-hub.org), were launched at an online event that took place in June 2021. The launch event consisted of small group discussions and an interactive panel discussion with representation from the Health Research Authority (HRA), RAND Europe, Research on Research Institute (RoRI) and NIHR patient and public involvement.

The panel discussion addressed the benefits and challenges of conducting research on research (RoR), with a particular focus on how to translate evidence into practice. A key theme that emerged in the discussion was the importance of embedding the public perspective throughout the research lifecycle—not only as participants but as active contributors to shaping research priorities, ensuring relevance, and enhancing trust. These aligned with the broader aims of the NIHR’s Research & Evidence (R&E) strategy, which emphasises meaningful public involvement to maximise the societal value of research investments.

The event brought over 100 participants representing researchers and research managers, funding organisation staff, and members of the public. To increase its accessibility to the event, BSL interpreters supported the event throughout the day.

The key messages from the launch event were strategies to make the registry and hub a successful contribution to the research landscape, the importance of placing the needs of communities (e.g., general public) at the centre of research and design, of prioritising research that is important to the user, and of making the studies easily accessible by considering how to disseminate research more widely.

The discussion during the panel recognised that RoR is fragmented, there is duplication and a lack of transparency among RoR researchers. The registry and hub were created so researchers or those interested in RoR are aware of work that has taken place or is being developed, and to provide a space that supports building a network.

A recording of the event was shared to increase visibility, ensuring the message reached national and international organisations. Feedback from the attendees found the discussions interesting and the publication of the registry timely.

1. **Chatter Sessions**

Together with the RoR registry and hub we have set up the RoR registry and hub Chatter sessions. These sessions are online discussions on a topic of interest to the registry and overall RoR community. The three main purposes for the Chatter sessions are: to support the dissemination of RoR activity; to encourage honest and open discussions about challenges inherent to conducting research and to communicate evidence that can inform future interventions or collaborations. The hour-long sessions are held virtually with a presentation by an invited speaker followed by an opportunity for the community to ask questions and have open discussions. The speakers are practitioners, early career and established researchers, evaluators or other stakeholders associated with funding organisations, universities or organisations within the research ecosystem conducting projects and/or research, developing policies, and overall expertise in exploring research processes.

The first ROR chatter session took place in January 2022. Sixteen Chatter sessions have been delivered since January 2022 covering topics such as the Research Excellence Framework, the Hidden REF, open research and citation metrics, research waste, avoiding bias in clinical trials, global health research, narrative CVs, research integrity practices and others (a list of past sessions and link to some of the recordings is available here: https://ror-hub.org/ror-upcoming-events/). The sessions are free to attend, are advertised by email to community members and promoted on social media to reach wider audiences. Attendance of the chatter sessions has ranged from 25 to 100 attendees affiliated to funding organisations, higher education institutions, journal publishers, independent researchers, research managers, practitioners, and knowledge mobilisers. Following feedback from the community sessions from July 2022 have been recorded.

1. **Evaluating the registry: ROR survey**

Eighteen months after the launch of the RoR registry and hub, an evaluation exercise took place using an online survey. The survey was sent to the RoR registry and hub members and was open for 4 weeks, between April and May 2023. The purpose of this survey was to collect feedback on the registry and the chatter sessions to explore how the RoR team could improve the service and increase collaborations to make the most use of the registry. The survey consisted of seventeen questions including open and closed questions. The survey was sent to 276 members of the hub and received 47 responses (response rate 17%).

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses resulted in five themes: 1: Chatter sessions (two subthemes: management and topic coverage) 2: Registry outputs 3: Opportunities for improvement and collaboration 4: Promoting the registry 5: Reasons for not interacting with the registry (Fig. 1)



Figure 1. Five thematic themes resulting from the rapid evaluation

Theme 1: Chatter sessions

Management

The management of sessions theme described how the sessions were organised by the RoR team and how these could be improved. Respondents indicated that more detail of upcoming sessions and regular reminders before the event, rapid circulation of recordings and presentations following a session to members, and offering an open forum-themed session with the community hub to discuss topics for future sessions would support attendance as well as offer of presentations.

*“More clear information when the session is advertised saying what the session is about and the aims of the discussion. It's not always clear from the title and speaker information given as to what the session is, so I often don't sign up because I don't know what I'm signing up for!!”*

Topics

Chatter session topics described the topics to explore in future chatter sessions. Members provided a range of topics future chatter sessions could explore, including bias in database searches, how RoR could influence policy and practice, research cultures and how RoR is embedded in organisational practices. Artificial intelligence was also a commonly reported topic; including the use of AI in funding applications.

*“The potential biases in database searches; the role of AI in funding applications (writing or triaging); how to ensure that RoR reaches the right people and influences policy/practice”*

Theme 2: Registry outputs

This theme captured responses of other types of outputs and dissemination opportunities that the registry could offer. In response to the question “*Can you suggest ways to encourage people to use the registry and hub?”* participants suggested introducing mini blogs on topics raised by members (and promoting via social media), pushing for more content such as forum chats, spotlight studies, highlighting funding opportunities and reminding members to update their studies on the registry.

*“Perhaps supplement or replace the discussion forum with mini blogs on topic raised by users - a short blog describing the issue, what's known, being done/not being done research wise. Add an image to make it appealing and tweet to get people to come to the site. Send the blog to leaders in the area of the topic for their comments and publish - tweet again!”*

As a result of the evaluation, changes to the website were made at the end of 2024, where the discussion forum on the website was phased out and replaced by a section where members of the community hub are able to upload research outputs to the website.

Theme 3: Opportunities for improvement and collaboration

Theme 3 captured the responses related to suggestions for improving the registry one year after the launch. Suggestions received were: reminders for registry members to update their studies, the registry to highlight upcoming talks (not limited to the chatter sessions but also across the RoR community), getting members of the public involved in research on research, providing support in creating registries of studies for organisations that may lack dedicated RoR staff, and clearer information when advertising a chatter session (including the aims of the session).

*“… proactively contacting people working in the area and offering to enter their work for them to increase the numbers of studies included.”*

The survey findings outlined the potential for registry and hub members to collaborate. Opportunities for collaboration included researchers sharing their experiences of working in RoR to support early career researchers, institutes engaging in RoR methodology, research policy discussion, and members to suggest topics for future chatter sessions, as described in theme 1.

“*Perhaps getting some experienced ‘big names’ in methods research to talk about how they got started might encourage more junior researchers to join in?”*

Theme 4: Promoting the registry

Theme 4 extracted responses about learning about the registry. Over half of the respondents who answered this question (n=6) reported that they heard about the registry through word of mouth. Other responses included attending the launch event in June 2021, finding out about the registry via Twitter, and doing a Google search for registries.

Theme 5: Reasons for not interacting with the registry

The final theme categorised reasons why members might not interact with the registry. Members not having the time or being too busy was a commonly reported finding (n=5). Other reasons included there being too many other forums and therefore interaction being limited, not doing much work on RoR and understanding what content would be of interest to share with others in the community.

*"There are so many forums kicking about, I have ended up not really interacting with any of them”*

1. **Online research festival *AI and research: a promising relationship?***

In May 2024, we organised and hosted a virtual festival titled ‘AI and research: a promising relationship?’ This festival was the opportunity to reflect, disseminate and celebrate the registry’s achievements over the last three years. The research festival also aimed to increase the impact and visibility of the research activity captured in the registry, strengthen collaborations amongst researchers, and increase the mobilisation of RoR evidence to foster research excellence. The festival included a panel discussion with speakers from the Ada Lovelace Institute, the University of Bologna, the University of Sheffield and Leiden University. Discussions revolved around the role of artificial intelligence in research, including whether AI could reduce research bureaucracy and how AI could impact research integrity.

This grant also allowed us to appoint two undergraduate students from the University of Southampton as social media and events interns to provide administrative support throughout the planning, delivery and post-festival activities. Through this support, funds from the grant contributed to capacity building of early career researchers. Three other students were invited to support the festival on the day and write highlights post-event. The key goal of the internship was to allow students to be involved in a large project from start to finish and gain insight into a large organisation beyond academia and involving health research funders, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with national and international stakeholders. The students learned about the registry, and the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) and provided valuable support to the team. The interns led and supported various activities, including writing the event programme, setting up the Eventbrite invitation, promoting the event with external networks, coordinating panel members, presenters, the British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter and live illustrator, and coordinating rehearsals. The students were successful with their internships as evidenced by the feedback provided by the registry team members at NIHR.

107 participants from organisations including research funders, Universities, charities, hospitals and publishers in 28 countries worldwide (Fig. 2) attended the festival. Registration for the festival was limited to 250 spaces and was fully registered.



Figure 2: Countries represented by the festival attendees

An illustrator from Live Doodle Art, Design and Illustration created a live visual representation of the topics discussed throughout the festival (Fig. 3). This type of output is a known practice in research to allow for improved dissemination of science and increase research implementation and impact.



Figure 3. A live illustration by Oguzhan Secir from Live Doodle Art, Design and Illustration

**Where the RoR registry and hub is now and lessons learned so far**

Since its launch, the RoR registry and hub has engaged a growing international community and served as a central resource to promote transparency, collaboration, and evidence mobilisation in research on research. Over 800 people have engaged with the registry or Chatter sessions and this figure is growing continuously. Some indicators being tracked to measure growth are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Indicators to track the growth of the RoR registry and hub

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Metric** | **Figures and information** |
| Number of people engaged with the registry (excluding the NIHR) | 685 |
| Number of people engaged with the registry, including the NIHR and HEI staff | 827 |
| Number of studies registered | 62 (as of June2025) |
| Geographic reach\* | UK, Europe, Asia, Australia, North America, South America, Africa  |
| Registered members | 252 |

\*See Fig. 4

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Figure 4. RoR registry and hub worldwide community

**Challenges identified**

Challenges related to the uptake of the registry, common to other types of registries, have emerged through both internal tracking and feedback gathered in the evaluation survey. These are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Description of challenges in the uptake of the RoR registry and hub

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Challenges** | **Description** |
| Updating registered projects | Difficulties in maintaining updated records of the registry. Either due to lack of time or not keeping track of the task, records of the studies or projects registered are not updated regularly, which may affect data accuracy or completeness (e.g., outputs or impact related metrics not being captured). |
| Time constraints | Survey respondents cited lack of time as a key reason for disengagement. |
| Registry visibility and awareness | Some participants heard about the registry only via word-of-mouth. Reaching out via social media (i.e., LinkedIn) or other campaigns might support further uptake, including for example, engaging with other RoR organisations or publishers of RoR work. |

These findings underscore the importance of continued user engagement strategies, such as:

* Sending regular reminders to encourage regular updates of studies and projects.
* Implementing automated tools for status checking (e.g., prompts to verify project completion or results sharing).
* Publishing highlighted studies or registry summaries on a regular basis.
* Exploring AI-powered features to flag incomplete or outdated entries and support project curation.

**Impact and next steps**

Research registries are vital tools for promoting research transparency, reproducibility and accountability. By providing a platform for registering research projects, registries can help mitigate issues such as publication bias and data duplication. This fosters greater confidence in the integrity and reliability of research findings. Registries can play a crucial role in research by facilitating the identification of research gaps, promoting collaboration, and enabling the evaluation of research practices. By capturing key information about RoR projects, such as study objectives, methodologies and planned analyses, registries help researchers question the effectiveness of various research methods and reporting practices. The work of the RoR registry and hub is actively contributing to a culture of continuous improvement in research, ultimately leading to more robust and impactful research outcomes.

This effort aligns with the growing recognition of the importance of rigorous and transparent research practices, as evidenced by initiatives such as the Research on Research Institute (RoRI) and the UK Metascience Unit (UK Metascience Unit, 2024). The ROR registry and hub have collaborated with RoRI since its inception in 2019 to ensure our objectives align, generate collaborations and overall ensure that we reach our goals through joining efforts.

While online forums offer a convenient platform for users across various time zones and roles, they often fall short in fostering dynamic conversations. As an alternative, the RoR registry and hub has integrated a form that allows community members to contact investigators who have registered their studies or projects, and as a result, actively promoting collaborations. By bringing together researchers, the RoR registry can help build capacity and expertise in the field of RoR. However, the efficacy of this feature remains unmeasured and its impact of which requires investigation.

To further promote and encourage registration of research, the RoR registry have established collaborations with F1000 Research and MetaROR and is developing new collaborations on an ongoing basis. This partnership will aim to increase awareness and adoption of registration practices, ultimately enhancing the transparency and reproducibility of RoR research.

The Research on Research registry and hub has fostered valuable collaborations in support of groups working on focused metascience areas, including open research practices (DORA and F1000), developing standard outcome measures (COMET), reducing bias and research waste (Trial Forge) and publishing RoR work (MetaROR). A partnership with F1000, launched in 2023, supports the publication and reach of RoR outputs through the Research on Research, Policy and Culture Gateway on F1000Research. All these collaboration incentivise study registration, promoting better research quality, transparency, and impact. Additionally, the RoR group's collaboration with the Ensuring Value in Research (EViR) consortium led to an invitation to participate in the 2023 funders’ forum at the Hague, opening further opportunities to raise awareness of the registry’s goals and expanding its community.

Over the next year, the RoR registry will focus on several key initiatives to solidify its future and maximise impact. The continued support for networking within the RoR community, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange will be essential in achieving this. Efforts will also be directed towards promoting the use of the registry, encouraging researchers to both utilise the platform to register their work as well as discover the work of others. Collaboration with key stakeholders such as funders, journals like F1000Research, the Research on Research, Policy & Culture Gateway and other relevant organisations will remain a priority. These partnerships aim to link research on research platforms, creating a more integrated ecosystem, and increase the visibility of available resources.

Following the success of the RoR registry and the festival in May 2024, current funding from the latest Research Culture grant will allow us to support our outreach, networking and knowledge mobilisation activities. In addition, we will explore ways in which the outputs added to the registry can be assigned a DOI to encourage the registration of research projects whilst enhancing dissemination and impact of research and good research practices.

**CONCLUSION**

The RoR registry and hub has also delivered a space that serves as a powerful tool for Southampton and NIHR researchers to promote their work supported by communication and collaboration fostered by the implementation of Chatter sessions. The Registry Advisory Group (RAG) group has been a valuable component in the success of the registry, establishing valuable networking connections with national and international funders and publishers. In 2023 it welcomed new members to widen representation of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and the Health Research Authority (HRA).

The success of the registry in filling a gap in the research on research space has been demonstrated through the engagement of the community. Still, the long-term sustainability of the registry depends on securing alternative funding sources to support a range of activities. These include administrative tasks like promoting the registration of studies, increasing collaborations, organising Chatter sessions and other virtual events, and updating the website. Research-related activities focus on tracking registered studies to identify collaboration opportunities, potential new studies, and topics for discussion. Finally, exploring the impact of offering DOIs are crucial steps for the registry's future.

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**DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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