

SURF: Involving Patients and the Public in Healthcare-Associated Infection Research

Involving patients and the public in infection prevention

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Introduction

Through their National HCAI Research Network, the Department of Health (England) has funded the establishment of a new HCAI Service Users Research Forum (SURF) to encourage greater patient and public involvement in infection research.

SURF provides a forum for interested service users to find out more about HCAI research and supports their involvement in research in a variety of ways from helping to set research priorities and appraise research proposals, to collecting data in the field and lead their own research projects.

Second SURF Workshop: Research Training



Service Users Research Forum (SURF)

SURF works on two levels - giving benefits to all involved:

1. For patients and the public it represents an unprecedented opportunity for them to become more involved in the world of research. Joining SURF gives members the opportunity to:

- Help improve HCAI services and treatments
- Share personal knowledge and experiences
- Influence the way HCAI research is planned and conducted
- Develop new skills through specialist training and support
- Improve the way findings are reported and disseminated
- Make a genuine contribution to the HCAI research

2. For the HCAI research community SURF acts as a new resource.

Helping researchers to:

- Identify new research priorities
- Improve the quality and scope of their research
- Gain new health and social care perspectives on HCAI
- Understand the concerns of patients and the public
- Improve the experience of research participants
- Produce patient friendly information and documentation
- Fulfil Government requirements in relation to public involvement

In Their Own Words

SURF Members come from a wide variety of backgrounds but all are bound by a common goal to make a difference to HCAI research. Each member brings with them their own unique experiences and reasons for joining SURF. Here are some of those reasons in their own words:

What concerns you most about HCAI?

- My main concern is that when funding dries up and/or staff get de-motivated that the numbers of HCAIs will rise sharply again.
- The suffering and dismay caused to infected patients and their families.
- The fact that, in spite of apparent increased vigilance and care, the situation has hardly improved and in some respects has deteriorated.

Why did you become involved with SURF?

- To play my part in preventing other families going through what we did when my mother died after contracting three infections in Hospital.
- A strong belief that service user involvement can make a difference.
- SURF can provide researchers with access to patients/public that have personal and anecdotal experience of the impact of HCAIs. These experiences are an essential ingredient to research.

What do you hope to achieve through your membership of SURF?

- Improved dissemination of knowledge about HCAIs.
- The prevention of HCAIs is a priority for the NHS and the World Health Organization and I believe the patient experience has to be an integral part of the development and implementation of preventative measures.
- Encouragement of other patients/carers/public to play a role in participating in HCAI research and in gaining acceptance among researchers of the value of such participation.

How do you think SURF can make a difference?

- By not reinventing the wheel but targeting funding to the most important research.
- By providing a mechanism and support for the public to voice their views to the research community and to develop knowledge and skills enabling them to contribute more effectively to participation in research.
- SURF has the capability of harnessing the patient experience with research techniques which could be applied both in the clinical and non-clinical research arena and provide the platform for researchers and research projects to access that experience.

If you could give researchers in infection one piece of advice about how best to involve patients and the public, what would it be?

- Accept the principle of public involvement as readily as you embrace the need for ethical review of NHS research and plan accordingly.
- Make use of the patient/public experience to devise and develop evidence based collaborative working arrangements can benefit the national and international approach towards reduction in HCAIs.

How can SURF Help Your Organisation

Approach us now if you would like us to:

- Comment on your research proposals
- Become involved in your research group
- Help you to devise lay materials
- Engage other service users

To find out more about SURF, its members and what they can do for you please visit www.hcaisurf.org, email info@hcaisurf.org or telephone 020 8209 4145