



University of  
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

# Efficient Trials: Investing in People

Dr Kirsty Sprange

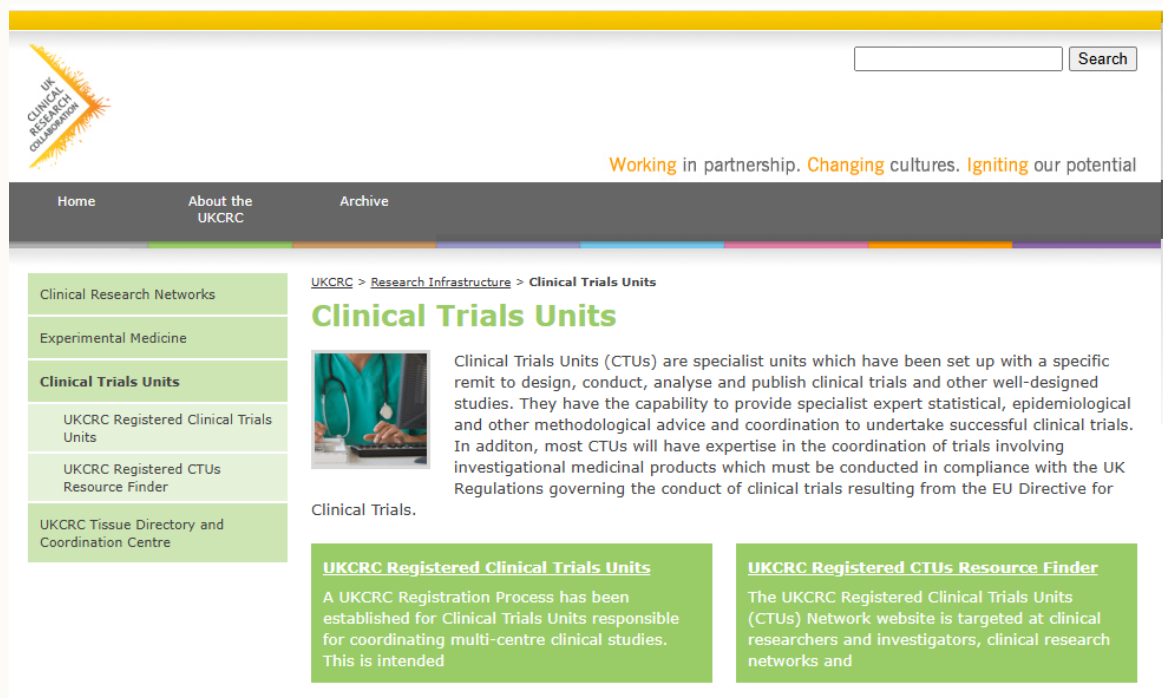
Assistant Professor of Clinical Trials

**NOTTINGHAM  
CLINICAL  
TRIALS  
UNIT**

at the University of Nottingham



# Perspective



UKCRC  
RESEARCH  
COLLABORATION

Working in partnership. Changing cultures. Igniting our potential

Home About the UKCRC Archive

UKCRC > Research Infrastructure > Clinical Trials Units

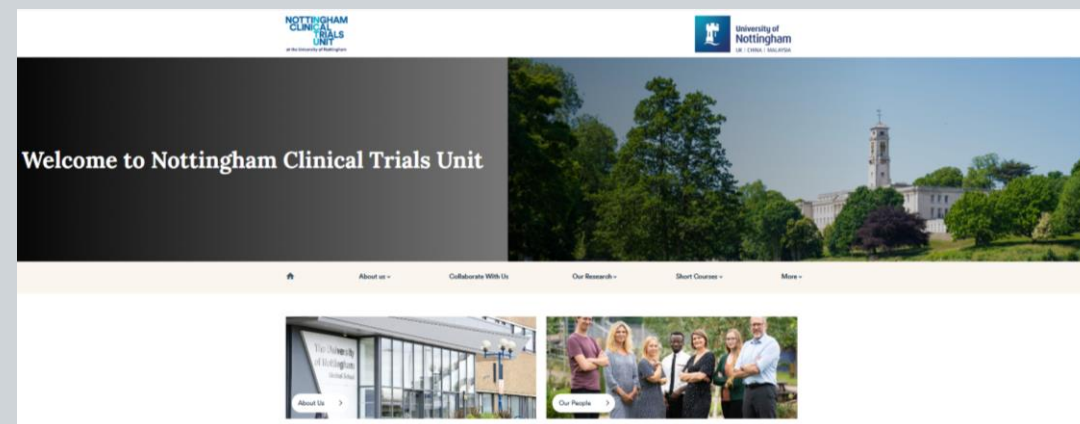
## Clinical Trials Units

Clinical Trials Units (CTUs) are specialist units which have been set up with a specific remit to design, conduct, analyse and publish clinical trials and other well-designed studies. They have the capability to provide specialist expert statistical, epidemiological and other methodological advice and coordination to undertake successful clinical trials. In addition, most CTUs will have expertise in the coordination of trials involving investigational medicinal products which must be conducted in compliance with the UK Regulations governing the conduct of clinical trials resulting from the EU Directive for Clinical Trials.

**UKCRC Registered Clinical Trials Units**  
A UKCRC Registration Process has been established for Clinical Trials Units responsible for coordinating multi-centre clinical studies. This is intended

**UKCRC Registered CTUs Resource Finder**  
The UKCRC Registered Clinical Trials Units (CTUs) Network website is targeted at clinical researchers and investigators, clinical research networks and

- As a trial methodologist
- UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) registered Clinical Trials Units (CTUs)



NOTTINGHAM CLINICAL TRIALS UNIT  
www.nottingham.ac.uk/ctu

University of Nottingham  
THE CLINICAL TRIALS UNIT

## Welcome to Nottingham Clinical Trials Unit

About us Collaborate With Us Our Research Short Courses More

About Us Our People



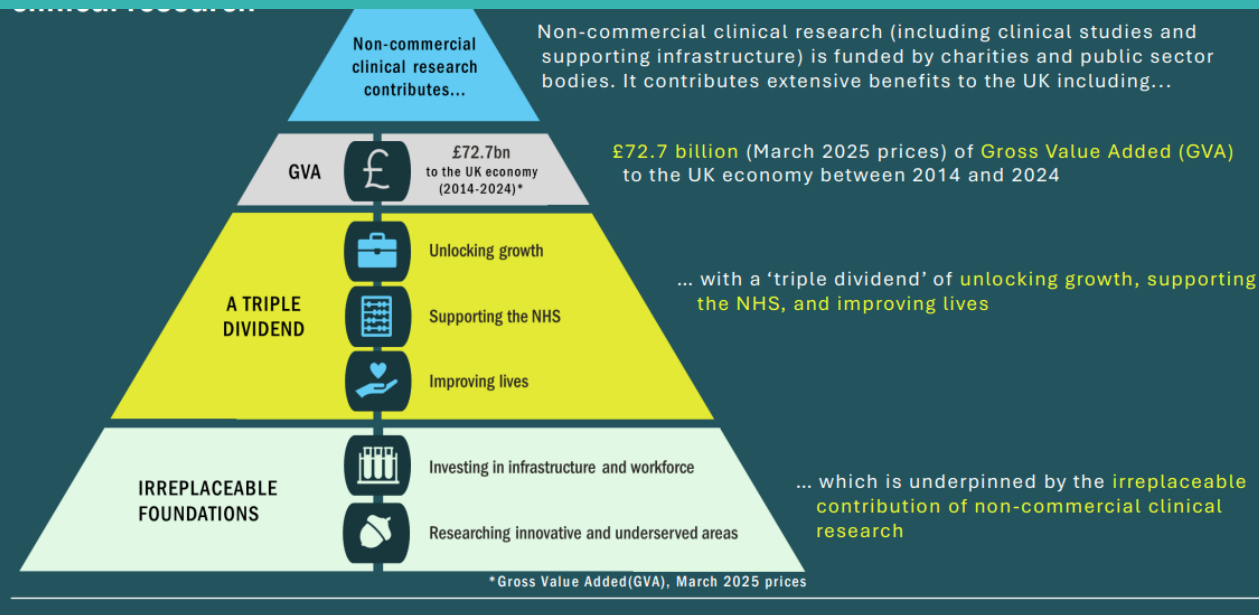
# Value of clinical trials

**UK NIHR 2024/25 invested over:  
£578m in research funding**

**Swedish government:  
2023 – 46.8billion SEK**

**Swedish Research Council:  
8billion SEK to HEIs each year**

## Association of Medical Research Charities and Wellcome Trust



<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/reports-and-performance/annual-report-202425/financial-summary>

<https://www.vr.se/english/analysis/reports/our-reports/2024-05-21-the-swedish-research-barometer-2023.html>

<https://www.vr.se/english/analysis/swedish-research-in-figures.html>



# The challenge



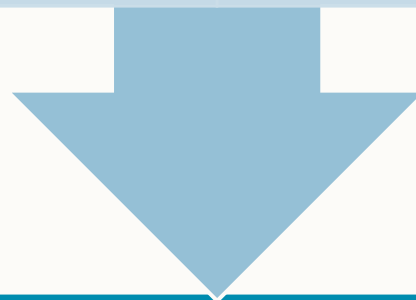
# Conducting trials has become more complex

Multipurpose

Societal  
priorities

Regulations  
and guidelines

Scientific  
advancements



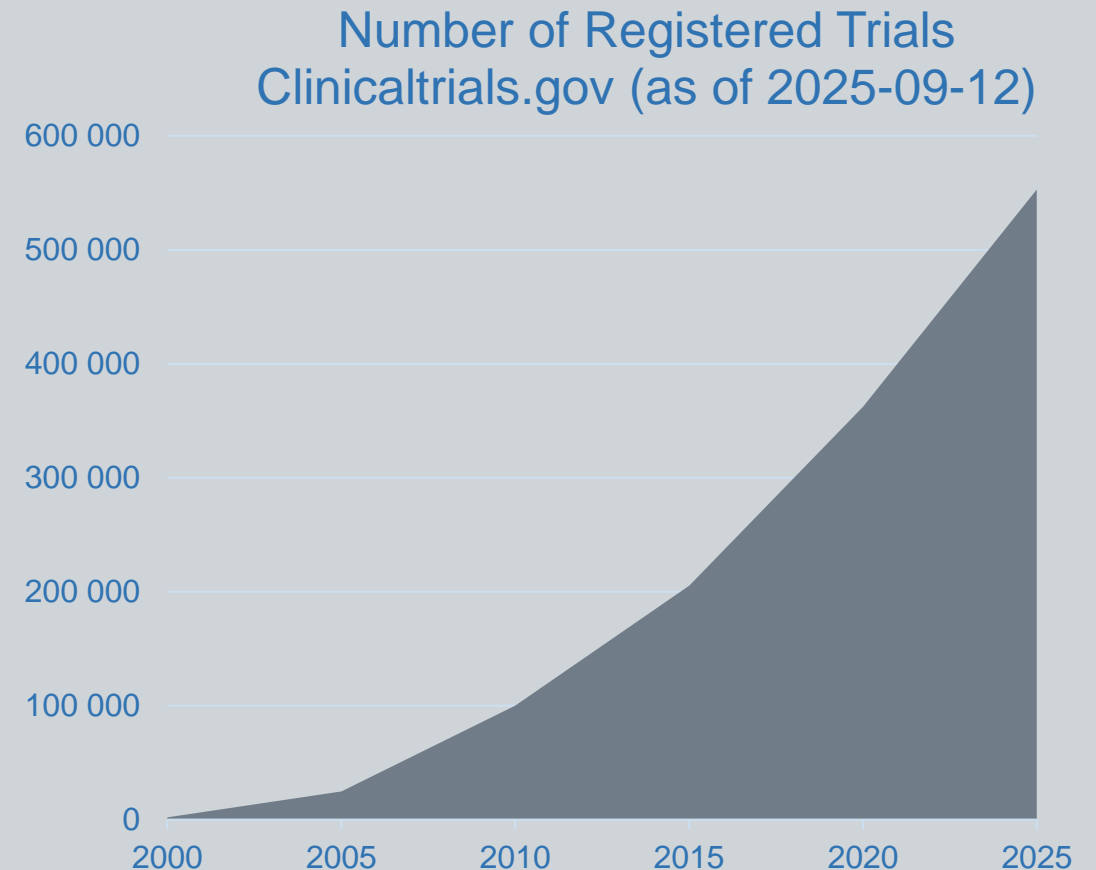
## Workforce with leadership capability



# Capacity

- Availability of trained staff
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic
- Job stability
- Investment
- Recognition of value

And yet.....the number of registered trials grows





# Who are the clinical trial 'workforce'?



Policy paper

# The Future of Clinical Research Delivery: 2022 to 2025 implementation plan

Published 30 June 2022

## Clinical researchers in the United Kingdom:

Building capacity to improve population health  
and promote economic growth

Report by the Nursing, Midwifery and  
Allied Health Professions Task and Finish group

NIHR | National Institute for  
Health and Care Research

News, views and stories

Search NIHR

▼ About us

▼ Research funding

▼ Career development

▼ Support and services

▼ Our research

▼ Get involved

## Research career development funding programmes

Our flexible academic funding programmes can be combined  
with clinical training and practice.



[Homepage](#) > [Career development](#) > Research career funding programmes

NIHR career development funding is available through [the NIHR Academy](#) at different career levels, from undergraduate to professorships. Our funding is for all professionals across health and social care.

Schemes for clinical  
research staff :

- 2021 NIHR UK professional accreditation scheme for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRP)
- 2021 NIHR UK wide Associate Principal Investigator Scheme

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-future-of-uk-clinical-research-delivery-2021-to-2022-implementation-plan>.

[https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MRC-250605-250515-MRC\\_Clinical-Researcher-Nursing\\_8.pdf](https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/MRC-250605-250515-MRC_Clinical-Researcher-Nursing_8.pdf)



Methodology Incubator  
Careers | Connections | Knowledge

ABOUT US ▾ WORKSTREAMS AND COMMUNITIES ▾ EVENTS RESOURCES AND OUTPUTS NETWORK MAP ▾ CONTACT 🔍

# Careers in Methodology

Raising awareness of methodology careers in health and care research methodology

ABOUT US

Be a research methodologist and make a difference!

Join the Methodology Incubator

Someone who:  
“develops and applies procedures, tools and techniques for gathering, accessing, analysing and interpreting data in health, public health and social care research”



## Value – ‘Team science’



Team science is the practice of conducting **collaborative** scientific research with **interdependent** individuals from **diverse disciplines** and specialties to tackle **complex challenges** that are beyond the scope of a single person or field



# Evidencing the problem



# Career Development in Trial Management: Survey Insights from UKTMN (2019)

Trial managers play a crucial role in delivering high-quality clinical trials but lack a standardized career pathway.

## **Methods:**

Online survey of 420 UK Trial Managers' Network members to identify career development opportunities and barriers.

## **Key Findings:**

- Top opportunities: Training, trial design involvement, undertaking relevant qualifications
- Top barriers: Funding, limited development opportunities, unclear career pathway
- 95% consider career development important
- Variability in contracts – leads to disparity

## **Conclusion:**

Clear career pathways and support are needed from employers, sponsors, and funders to build a skilled trial management workforce.



# Professional Development Priorities for Research Methodologists: UK Study (2024)

**Aim:** Understand and prioritise professional development needs.

## Method:

3-round electronic Delphi - 207 participants  
National consensus meeting

## Results:

- Rated 56 professional development aspects
- 25 priorities consensus

## Conclusion:

Priorities highlight need for structured support, training, role recognition, and funding to enhance professional development

Professional development needs statement	Mean score	Percentage of participants who scored a statement 7-9 (number of participants)
Consensus in ( $\geq 70\%$ of participants rated the statement as critical (score 7-9))		
1. Having a line manager who is supportive and encouraging of my professional development	8.7	100% (141/141)
2 1 Having a career pathway, including promotion criteria, that recognise the specialist/technical expertise of a methodologist	8.3	94% (131/140)
3 1 Having time to attend training courses relevant to methodologists	7.6	92% (133/144)



# Addressing the problem



# The Concordat



To improve the **working conditions, career development, and recognition** of researchers, especially those on fixed-term contracts, and to make research careers more attractive and sustainable

## Researcher Development Concordat Strategy Group signatories



Applicable to:

Researchers, Institutions,  
Managers and Funders



# The Concordat – 3 core principles

## Environment and Culture

- Promote a positive and **inclusive** research culture
- Ensure researchers feel **valued, supported**, and part of the wider community

## Employment

- Provide **fair, transparent, and secure** employment practices
- Address challenges such as job precarity and limited **progression opportunities**

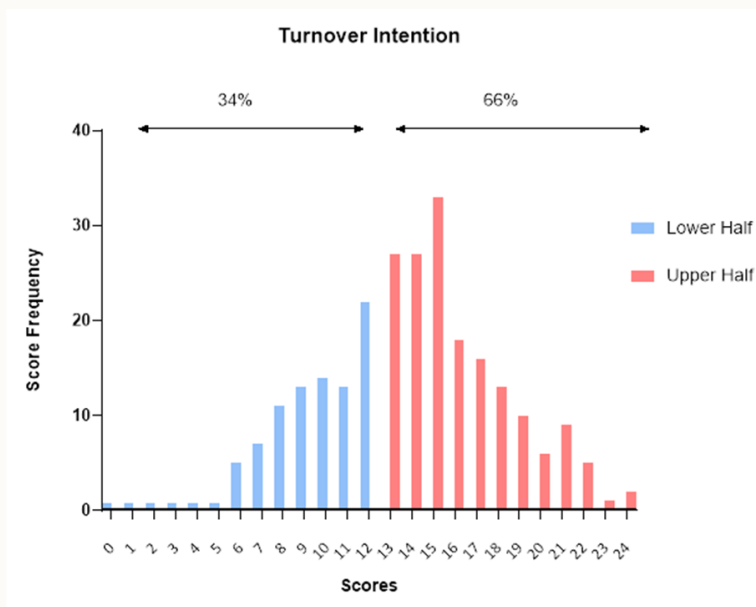
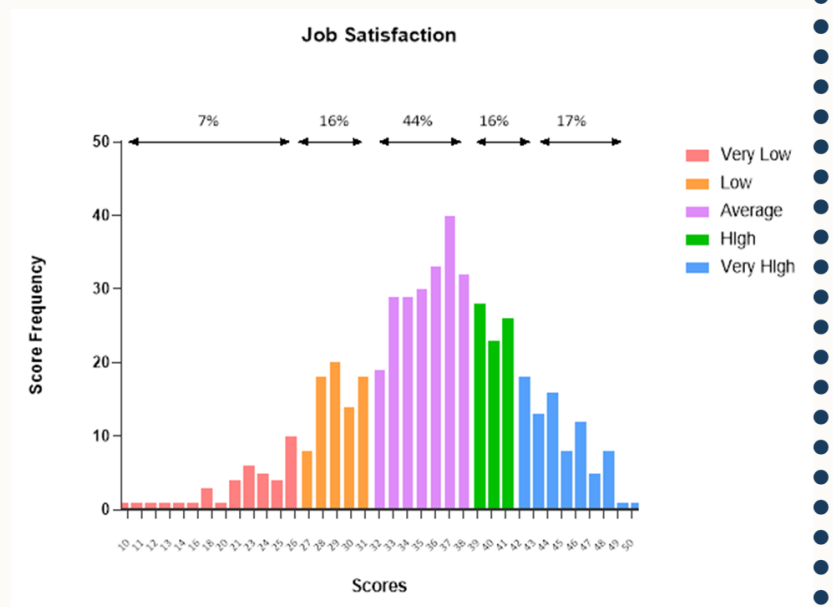
## Professional and Career Development

- Support researchers to develop a **wide range of skills**
- Encourage at least **10 days of professional development per year**
- Prepare researchers for **careers** both inside and outside academia



# Flourishing and Job Satisfaction Among Clinical Trial Unit Staff (2024)

- Role of flourishing in clinical trial staff working in UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC)-registered Clinical Trial Units (CTUs)
- Survey (n=484), focus groups (n=24) and consensus panels (n=18)
- Functions of flourishing: role, supportive relationships, development opportunities, salary and flexible working.



# FACTS

## FLOURISHING AS CLINICAL TRIAL STAFF



### WORKPLACE WELLBEING GUIDANCE

FOR UKCRC-REGISTERED CTUs



## Table of Contents

Introduction ..... Pgs. 2-4

### SECTION 01

FACTS study main findings ..... Pgs. 7-8  
Key insights ..... Pgs. 9-14

1

### SECTION 02

Recognition & Appreciation ..... Pgs. 17-18  
Communication ..... Pgs. 19-24  
Flexibility ..... Pg. 25  
Workload Management ..... Pgs. 26-32  
Meaningful Work ..... Pg. 33  
Training & Development ..... Pgs. 34-38  
Wellbeing ..... Pgs. 39-41

2

### SECTION 03

Questionnaires ..... Pgs. 43-45  
Scoring Manual ..... Pg. 46  
CTU Reflection ..... Pg. 47  
Signposting ..... Pgs. 48-49  
Further Resources ..... Pg. 50

3

### SECTION 04

Note Pages ..... Pgs. 52-54  
References ..... Pg. 55  
Acknowledgements ..... Pg. 56  
Meet the team ..... Pg. 57  
A final note from us ..... Pg. 58

4

5

## KEY INSIGHTS INTO A FLOURISHING CTU

### SOCIAL ELEMENTS & COMMUNICATION

Strong social relationships at work are crucial for high job satisfaction and flourishing in CTU staff. A flourishing social environment is characterised by: efficient teamwork, supportive and approachable managers and senior leaders, a culture of change where issues are acknowledged and addressed both at individual and Unit levels, a place where mistakes are seen as opportunities for growth, appreciation is shown for efforts and expertise, and inclusive social wellbeing activities are offered to create a sense of belonging.

In your own words...



What makes you feel  
satisfied at work?

Feeling empowered by my line manager to get things done and lead change. Problem-solving and helping other people solve problems. People recognising work you've done and thanking you/giving you a shout out - especially senior people. Also, small things that make you feel like someone cares if you have a good day.

### Top tips to get started:

- Actively listen to your colleagues and follow up on agreed actions.
- Communication needs and styles differ; request feedback and work on making improvements.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help and offer support to others as needed.
- Be proactive in identifying your/your team's skill development needs and raising them with the relevant manager.
- Consider completing self-awareness exercises with your team – useful resources can be accessed online.

See the Communication subsection of this guidance for more tips on creating a flourishing social environment.

9

## KEY INSIGHTS INTO A FLOURISHING CTU

[facts-flourishing@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:facts-flourishing@nottingham.ac.uk)



Aim: “to facilitate the development of a well-trained, highly motivated, effective workforce of trial managers within the UK health care system who will make an important contribution to the efficient delivery of high-quality clinical trials”

**UKTMN**  
Trial Managers' Network

Log in

About News and Blogs Events Jobs Resources Interact **Join**

## Welcome to the UK Trial Managers' Network

Enabling excellence for trial management professionals through learning and knowledge sharing

**MEMBERS**

We facilitate the development of a well-trained, highly motivated, effective workforce of trial managers within the UK health care system who will make an important contribution to the efficient delivery of high quality clinical trials.

A trial management professional is someone who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of a clinical trial. We provide support and resources for those at all levels of experience and varying roles.



- UK's first leadership programme
- 6-month hybrid programme includes face-to-face and online sessions
- Developed by trial managers, for trial managers
- Highly experienced executive coach
- Specific to TM challenges:
  - Influencing
  - leading in ambiguous situations
  - conflicting priorities
  - confidence and assertiveness
  - working with different people





## To conclude

- Develop skills and competencies
- Strengthen leadership and accountability
- Institutional adoption
- Job satisfaction
- Foster sector-wide collaboration





University of  
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

# Thank you

Email: [Kirsty.sprange@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Kirsty.sprange@nottingham.ac.uk)

X: @kesres75



- Concordat - <https://researchdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/>
- NIHR Methodology Incubator - [www.methodologyincubator.org.uk/](http://www.methodologyincubator.org.uk/)
- PROSPER - [10.1136/bmjopen-2024-085656](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2024-085656)
- UKTMN - <https://www.tmn.ac.uk/>
- NCTU - <https://www.nctu.ac.uk/>
- UK CRC - <https://www.ukcrc.org/research-infrastructure/clinical-trials-units/>