

4TH EDITION
APRIL 2026

Newsletter



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Or scan the QR code

A message from our Unit Lead, Professor Rhian Gabe

'The sun is shining upon us as I welcome you to the April edition. Thank you to our contributors and teams across Barts CTU and our sub-units, for a productive spring.

As featured on the One Show, TRANSFORM has started screening men for prostate cancer. Furthermore, our pioneering work to overcome inequities in trial participation was showcased at the new UK Data Driven Cancer Research Conference in Edinburgh, as was our growing portfolio at the recent PCUK Ideas to Innovation conference.

The Cancer Prevention Trials Unit (CPTU) and Experimental Rheumatology (EMR) subunits report on PPIE input to trial conduct and community engagement. We also hear from the Cardiovascular CTU (CVCTU) team about their blood pressure monitoring device work and offer a warm welcome to Ann Thomson.

Please read on and enjoy!'



GOOD NEWS STORIES



Celebrating our colleagues

The Barts CTU is pleased to welcome Ann Thomson as our new Head of Clinical Trial Operations. Ann joins from the Pragmatic Clinical Trials Unit at Queen Mary, bringing extensive experience in trial management, team leadership, and clinical study design. We're delighted to have her on board.

Congratulations also to Beverley Nickolls and Emily Kirkpatrick, our sub-unit colleagues, on their appointments to the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) Network groups. Beverley joins the Methods into Practice Group, and Emily the AI Group, both contributing to key areas shaping the future of clinical trials.

Spotlight Publication

Hot off the press... Adam Brentnall from Barts CTU has published an article in *The Conversation*, exploring prostate cancer overdiagnosis and its implications for screening. Read all about it here.

TRIAL UPDATES

PROSTATE CANCER UK TRANSFORM

Since the last edition of the Barts CTU newsletter, the TRANSFORM trial has reached a major milestone, with prostate health checks now underway and clinic activity continuing to grow.

Clinics now live and delivering

Clinics delivered through InHealth are now up and running, marking an important step forward for the study.

At the first InHealth clinic:
11 men attended

11 MRI scans were completed (a type of scan that creates detailed images of the prostate)

11 PSA tests were carried out (a blood test that helps indicate potential prostate problems)

Additional research samples were collected from most participants to help develop better tests in the future.

Building momentum

Clinic activity has continued to expand, with:
Further appointments delivered across multiple clinics
Increasing participant numbers and throughput
Growing demand as the study progresses
This reflects a clear shift from set-up to delivery, with activity continuing to scale.

Shaping research and practice

The study is also contributing to wider scientific discussion:
Professor Mark Emberton published an invited editorial in *European Urology* on the role of PSA testing before MRI.

Professor Hashim Ahmed and Nikhil Mayor published in *Nature Reviews Urology* on the benefits and potential harms of prostate cancer screening.

In the spotlight

The study has also featured on national television, with filming capturing participants attending screening in Ealing, London. The segment aired on BBC's The One Show, showcasing the real-world impact of the trial. You can find the link to the episode here.

A milestone moment

Moving into live clinic delivery is a significant achievement and reflects the dedication and collaboration of teams across the study.
With activity continuing to grow, this marks an exciting stage for TRANSFORM. Congratulations to everyone involved 👏



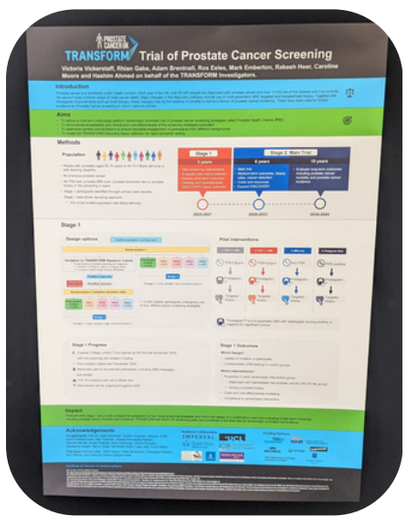


Prostate Cancer UK From Ideas to Innovations event: April 2026, London

At the *PCUK Ideas to Innovation* conference Rhian (Barts CTU Unit Lead) delivered a talk alongside Nikhil Mayor, Robert and Rakesh Heer from the wider TRANSFORM team, while Victoria Vickerstaff (Barts CTU) presented a poster. The conference also featured a section on **AVIDITY**, a trial supported by Rhian and Adam (Barts CTU).







HIGHLIGHTS

A message from our Unit Lead, Prof Rhian Gabe

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TRANSFORM

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Attending the Cancer Research UK Data Driven Cancer Research Conference- Edinburgh.

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NEWS FROM OUR SUBUNITS:

SCRATCH-HTN trial

Co-developed processes with PPI representatives

BRC MSK Community Event

TEAM TALKS

Attending the Cancer Research UK Data Driven Cancer Research Conference- Edinburgh

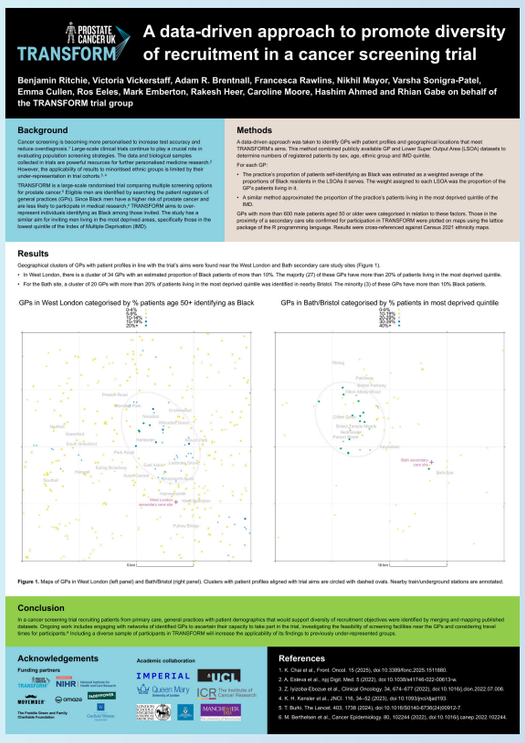
Meet more of our Barts CTU team in this edition, as Benjamin and Amanda share highlights and their experiences from the Cancer Research UK Data Driven Cancer Research conference in Edinburgh.

Benjamin Ritchie, Data Scientist

'*In February I joined several colleagues from Barts CTU and Queen Mary attending the Cancer Research UK Data Driven Cancer Research Conference in Edinburgh.*

Aside from the interesting posters, highlights for me included hearing about quantum technologies (without claiming to understand how they work!) and a range of applications of AI, from day-to-day project work to 'digital twins'. Although some of these seemed distant from the realities of current healthcare data systems, they provided an exciting indication of future opportunities.

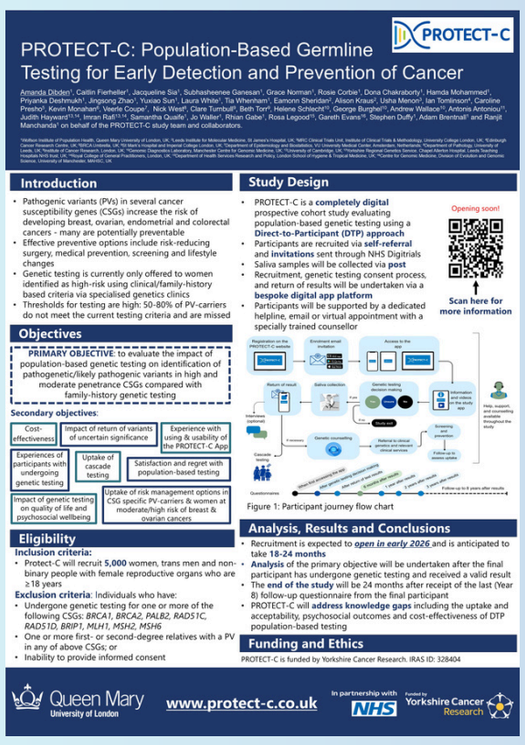
I enjoyed the keynote lecture about the future of drug discovery and was reassured by comments from the speaker that in this era of AI we should not lose sight of the core principles of the scientific method and critical thinking. Furthermore, the chairing of conference sessions by those with personal experience of cancer was a helpful way of keeping speakers and the audience focused on what really matters.'



Amanda Dibden, Statistician/ Epidemiologist

'*I attended the CRUK conference and presented a poster. The title of my poster was* ***PROTECT-C: Population-Based Germline Testing for Early Detection and Prevention of Cancer.***

I got matched with a patient advocate to talk through my poster with the purpose of 'talking them through your work in a lay friendly way'. This was the first time I have come across this at a conference but I ended up having a really good conversation with the patient advocate I was matched with, and she was able to give me some really useful feedback about my poster, the study, PPIE involvement in general and has also offered to help promote our study through her PPIE network, which will be useful when the study opens within the next few months.'



PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT (PPIE)

Our PPIE Coordinator, Cherrelle Salmon, is a co-applicant on the NIHR-funded ***Team Science Award.*** This training and development award focuses on how interdisciplinary teams work together, recognising the contributions of all members, valuing diverse perspectives, and embedding a positive and inclusive research culture. The programme brings together a UK-wide, cross-sector team to build collaborative ways of working and develop team science skills, with the aim of shaping a future research proposal in this area.

Known as ***Team Screen Time***, the group is exploring how participant screening is conducted in research studies, with a focus on understanding current practices and challenges and building on existing evidence to shape the next phase of their research in this area.

Further information can be found via the links below.

Team Science Programme | NIHR

Team Screen Time- Improving Screening Data Collection in Medical Research

NEWS FROM OUR SUBUNITS

SCRATCH-HTN trial

The **SCRATCH-HTN** trial explored a new way of managing high blood pressure in people whose BP remains high despite medication. Participants used a small, self-administered device clipped to the ear, delivering a mild electrical current.

Of **170** screened, **63** were randomised to active or sham devices. While both groups showed improvements, there was no significant difference between them overall. However, those with higher starting BP saw greater reductions with the active device.

The device was well tolerated, easy to use, and no serious device-related adverse events were reported.
The results were presented by **Dr Ajay Gupta** at the **American College of Cardiology** conference on **28th March** which will also be published soon.

Further information can be found on the study website **here**.

Co-developed processes with PPI representatives



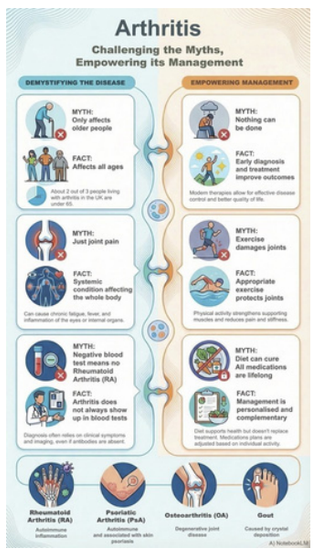
'At the Cancer Prevention Trials Unit (CPTU), we have recently co-developed a new process with our Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) panel to incorporate patient and public perspectives when developing Corrective and Preventative Action plans for when deviations occur during trials.

The PPI panel piloted the new process using an example of a past deviation, and identified additional actions that should be taken to prevent a similar deviation from happening again in the future.

The process will be implemented when any deviations occur involving deviations that involve participant data, experience or complaints.'

- **Nia Otake John**, PPIE Coordinator: Wolfson Institute of Population Health

Barts Biomedical Research Centre Musculoskeletal Community Event (BRC MSK)



'The Barts BRC MSK theme recently hosted a community event at Mile End Hospital titled Understanding Arthritis and Mental Health.

Dr James Perera led us through some common myths about arthritis, helping to clear up ordinary misconceptions.
Jade Fisher-Ryner from The Wren Project spoke about the charity's work and the support they offer to people affected by autoimmune conditions, highlighting how important a safe space for open communication can be for our patients.

The event lasted around an hour and sparked thoughtful questions and discussion. We had about 20 patients attending, and they told us they found the session helpful, reassuring, and easy to relate to.
Already looking forward to the next community event!'

- **Alessia Baseggio Conrado,** Research Manager: William Harvey Research Institute

Would you like to be featured in our next Newsletter?

Contact our PPIE Coordinator, Cherrelle
Email: c.salmon@qmul.ac.uk