

Excerpt from Knowledge Transfer Case Study for Bristol University Research and Enterprise Development office.

Audience: Funders

Bristol University approached me to write 11 case studies to illustrate how funding from the European Regional Development Fund has facilitated knowledge transfer between academic research and industry, enterprise and other research bodies in the south west of England. I conducted in-depth interviews, collated information from complex grant papers and wrote the reports in an accessible way for non-specialists. Below is an excerpt from one of the studies.

## **Knowledge Escalator Case Study**

### **Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between the University of Bristol (UoB) Department of Social Medicine and the Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF)**

#### **Overview**

The University of Bristol's Department of Social Medicine and the Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF) based in Thornbury, near Bristol are participating in a two-and-a-half-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) funded by the Technology Strategy Board (TSB).

The MRF, who fund scientific and clinical research into the detection, treatment and prevention of meningitis and septicaemia in the UK, are keen to gain a better picture of the needs of those who've survived these diseases, many of whom suffer physical and mental disability as a result. The Foundation believes that the financial and social cost of the disease's after-effects are being underestimated, and that a comprehensive, evidence-based study would give weight to campaigns for widespread immunisation and improvements to the support available to survivors.

To conduct such a survey requires epidemiological skills that the MRF don't have. Teaming up with the Department of Social Medicine at the University of Bristol enables them to draw on the expertise of Dr Caroline Trotter, an epidemiologist with an interest in bacterial meningitis and the use of vaccines to prevent the disease.

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership has provided the funds for a Research Associate, Laura Clark, to be based at the MRF and carry out this vital research, with regular input and guidance from Dr Trotter on gathering data from survivors and health professionals about after-effects, and how to effectively analyse and present the results.

#### ***What's the purpose of this initiative?***

Every year, c3,500 cases of meningitis and septicaemia are recorded in the UK and Ireland. 10% of patients die, but many will live with serious, life-long after-effects, such as amputations, severe mental disablement, deafness, paralysis and psychological problems.

The Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF) is a not-for-profit organisation that funds scientific and clinical research into the detection, treatment and prevention of meningitis and septicaemia in the UK. It promotes awareness of the symptoms, publishes treatment guidelines for professionals, and lobbies the Government for improved funding to reduce death and disability from the disease through universal vaccination and improvements in aftercare.

But the MRF state that it's been unable to influence the rehabilitation of meningitis survivors to the same extent as it does for the care of meningitis patients, because there is no comprehensive picture of survivor's experiences, or of the support services they require.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the standard of care received by survivors varies across the country, and that most do not receive the level of support required; indicating that the economic and social cost of care to the state is currently being underestimated.

To address these issues, and to advocate for improved services, the MRF need a deeper understanding of the problems faced by survivors, and a systematic way of identifying and gathering information about the consequences of meningitis from survivors, carers, health professionals and public health bodies.

The purpose of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership, funded by the Technology Transfer Board (TSB), and facilitated by the University's RED office via Staff Enterprise Champion, Frances Frith, was to team the MRF with the Department of Social Medicine at the University of Bristol.

The knowledge-base team at the University is led by Research Fellow, Dr Caroline Trotter, an epidemiologist whose research programme focuses on bacterial meningitis. Dr Trotter's expertise in methods of identifying, collecting and analysing data (and her knowledge of relevant software) will help the Foundation to gain the evidence-based material they require.

It's hoped that the outcomes of the KTP will enable the Foundation to:

- Plan, run and analyse surveys
- Carry out more informed and effective campaigns
- Produce better quality information for members
- Bid more effectively for research funding
- Be better informed to identify suitable research and support opportunities
- Work within the international arena

In particular, it's hoped that work will result in a stronger, evidence-based case for a new meningitis B (MenB) vaccination, contributing to a cost-effectiveness study (Counting the Cost of Meningitis) that weighs up the cost of care for survivors against the cost of widespread vaccination.

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