FEAM
Federation of European Academies of Medicine

Safeguarding European Medical Research post Brexit

Medical Research is a collaborative activity, supported by the exchange of people, knowledge and new ideas. Collaboration brings together new perspectives and produces more impactful research.[1]

The importance of this exchange is demonstrated by the close ties between medical researchers across Europe and is embodied in the ethos of our organisation, the Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM).

These close ties between us help to foster an environment which drives the generation of new knowledge, furthering our understanding of disease and of the determinants of health. Moreover, many of the today's major health challenges, from anti-microbial resistance to an ageing and increasingly multi-morbid population are best addressed together. Working in partnership to translate research can help us to prevent disease, to deliver new treatments and to improve care for patients and citizens across Europe and beyond.

The European Union has shown great leadership in cultivating these links by supporting the training and mobility of researchers, promoting collaborations and bringing together public and private partners to translate research. The shared benefits that have been accrued through this multi-lateral partnership have been achieved by building on the scientific excellence that exists throughout the nations of Europe.

The UK plays an integral role in European research, contributing scientific expertise and leadership and providing invaluable training experience to researchers from across the continent. For example, nine of the top twenty universities in Europe are based in the UK and institutions like these have enabled the UK to host more Marie Skladowska-Curie (MCSA) Fellows than any other European country.[2,3]

---

[1] Technopolis, 2017, The impact of collaboration: The Value of UK Medical Research to EU Science and Health https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/uk_and_eu_research_full_report_v6.pdf

[2] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats

[3] Technopolis, 2017, The impact of collaboration: The Value of UK Medical Research to EU Science and Health https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/uk_and_eu_research_full_report_v6.pdf

Now, as the UK prepares to leave the EU, we must ensure that the close and productive relationships between researchers is protected and preserved in order to address a shared aim of improving the health, safety and wealth of patients and citizens throughout Europe.

It is essential, therefore, that UK and EU negotiators reach an agreement that supports medical research. FEAM believes that in an agreement between the UK and the EU27 should have the following characteristics to support medical research:

Mobility of Researchers

Researchers at every career stage, as well as the technical staff on whom they rely, must continue to be able to move around Europe to train and develop their careers; to meet and find new collaborators; to access research infrastructure and to pursue new avenues of research.

Students and researchers benefit from exposure to a range of ideas and approaches during their training and the UK is an attractive destination for European researchers to develop their skills. As well as hosting the highest number of MCSA Fellows, around 16,000 students from other EU countries are registered on biomedical courses at UK universities and around 6,500 of these are postgraduates.[4]

Many of Europe's scientific leaders have spent part of their career in the UK. Likewise, UK researchers benefit from their experience in research teams across Europe.

It is not only skills that can be gained through this movement. Researchers often develop strong networks within the research community that they receive their training. These can be carried with a researcher throughout their career, wherever they choose to conduct their research.

We call on the Governments of the UK and EU Member States to work together to ensure that the movement of researchers between the UK and the EU 27 is not unduly inhibited after freedom of movement between the UK and the EU ends.

Driving excellence and forging collaborations

International collaboration is a central part of today's research and innovation endeavor and promotes excellent research. **An agreement on science and innovation must deliver an environment in which these excellent research and internationals collaborations can continue to flourish**.

[4] *ibid*

International collaboration is increasingly important globally and collaboration between the UK and EU Member States is now relatively more frequent than ever before.[5,6] Collaboration between the UK and European partners produces more impactful research than either partner alone.[7]

The European Union's Framework Programmes have been transformational in supporting high quality research and innovation throughout Europe. The involvement of the UK has undoubtedly been an important factor in driving excellent research throughout Europe with the European Research Council, relying on UK-based researchers more heavily than those from any other country to evaluate research applications in the Life Sciences.[8]

There is a strong precedent for non-Member States, such as Switzerland, making valuable contributions to the Framework Programmes. It is vital therefore that, as recommended in the LAB FAB APP report[9] to the Commission, **the UK should be given the opportunity to fully participate in future Framework Programmes**.

Safeguard patients' interests

The safety of patients in the UK and the EU must not be compromised by the UK's departure and nor should their ability to participate in clinical research.

Patient safety across Europe must be protected by the continued close cooperation and sharing of expertise between the European Medicine's Agency (EMA) and the UK regulator, the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Over half of clinical trials conducted in the EU involve collaboration between Member States[10] and the Clinical Trials Regulation is designed to streamline this kind of research. At present, the UK is a major contributor to European clinical trials, leading the third highest number of pan-EU trials and the second highest number in childhood diseases.

Shared regulatory standards can also facilitate clinical research by creating a common set of rules to adhere to and by reducing barriers to, for example, sharing of data. Preventing barriers to international collaboration in clinical research after Brexit would ensure that the number of patients benefitting from participation in clinical trials across Europe is not reduced

---

[5] Adams et al., 2018, Bilateral and Multilateral Coauthorship and Citation Impact: Patterns in UK and US International Collaboration https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frma.2018.00012/full

[6] UNESCO 2015, Science Report: Towards 2030 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002354/235406e.pdf

[7] Technopolis, 2017, The impact of collaboration: The Value of UK Medical Research to EU Science and Health https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/uk_and_eu_research_full_report_v6.pdf

[8] Technopolis, 2017, The impact of collaboration: The Value of UK Medical Research to EU Science and Health "" https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/uk_and_eu_research_full_report_v6.pdf

[9] LAB FAB APP (2017). Report of the independent High Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation Programmes. http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/hlg_2017_report.pdf

[10] Technopolis, 2017, The impact of collaboration: The Value of UK Medical Research to EU Science and Health https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/uk_and_eu_research_full_report_v6.pdf

and that the translation of research into innovative treatments is not delayed. Ultimately, this can help to bring new treatments to patients faster.

All possible steps must be taken to ensure that the UK and Europe can continue to collaborate in clinical research and that patients are not negatively affected by the UK's exit from the EU.

Collaboration in clinical research is particularly important in complex and rare diseases. This has been recognised by the creation of the European Reference Networks (ERNs).

The 24 ERNs bring together researchers and clinicians from across the European Union to address the unmet health needs of patients with complex and rare diseases. The UK is key contributor to these networks, leading a quarter of them.

After the UK's withdrawal from the EU it is vital that the UK remains an active participant in the ERNs to ensure that rare-disease patients throughout Europe can continue to benefit from bringing together Europe's finest expertise in rare diseases.

It is now down to the UK, the EU and to Member States to ensure that the unique relationship between UK and EU research is maintained for the benefit of medical research and ultimately of citizens across Europe. After all, **neither the UK, nor Europe can afford a 'Brexit' for medical research**.

October 2018

FEAM – the Federation of European Academies of Medicine

FEAM's mission is to promote cooperation between national Academies of Medicine and Medical Sections of Academies of Sciences in Europe; to provide them with a platform to formulate their collective voice on matters concerning human and animal medicine, biomedical research, education, and health with a European dimension; and to extend to the European authorities the advisory role that they exercise in their own countries on those matters.

Rue d'Egmont, 13
1000 Brussels | Belgium
+32 (0)2 793 02 50
Twitter: @FedEuroAcadMed
Email: info@feam.eu
web: www.feam.eu