

The CLAHRC's Embedded Research Team (ERT) is a multidisciplinary team with expertise in a number of research fields. It is currently working alongside staff and managers within University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (UCLH) - using research to address the issues facing a major NHS hospital. [Read more about the team and its work here.](#)



Research associates Dr Cecilia Vindrola (anthropologist), Nick Swart (health economist), Dr Sonya Crowe (Senior research associate, operational researcher), Dr Luca Grieco (operational researcher), and Dr Victoria Wood (anthropologist).

We've produced [a bite-sized guide to the ERT](#) and its work which covers the role of embedded researchers in improving services at a major NHS Hospital Trust.

CLAHRC BITE

The Role of Embedded Research in Quality Improvement July 2016

CLAHRC researchers identify benefits of embedded research and lessons for success in healthcare and other sectors

Use of researchers "embedded" within an external organisation is increasing but there has been little investigation of the characteristics of this approach, its potential and barriers and enablers to success.

Background

Embedded research is an approach where researchers work within and are affiliated to, for example, a health care organisation. This process sees researchers "immerse" themselves within an organisation to gain an understanding of the pressures and problems faced at different levels of the organisation.

Researchers "embedded" in an organisation work in partnership with staff producing knowledge that is collected and created 'on the ground', through daily interaction and negotiation with staff and service users. This offers the potential to ensure research is more closely aligned with the needs of an organisation, and, ultimately, end-users of services.



This partnership approach also offers a method of embedding research in an organisation's systems and processes - informing standards, policies and procedures - and building research capacity.

Research and Quality Improvement (QI)

NHS organisations are expected to have Quality Improvement (QI) strategies in place, and resources and staff to drive these forward. Research evidence has an increasing role in facilitating improvements in healthcare quality, by "mobilising" knowledge generated by research into active use by staff.

Features of the embedded researcher...

- Usually affiliated to an academic institution as well as an organisation outside of academia, thus working in a state of "in-between-ness"
- Develops long-term relationships with staff and is seen as "part of the team"
- Generates knowledge with local teams (co-produced) which responds to the needs of the host organisation



The embedded research approach is an emerging trend within and beyond healthcare, but, to our knowledge, there are no published reviews of the characteristics of this approach, its potential role and the challenges it might face.

Approach

CLAHRC researchers based at a large NHS hospital trust conducted a narrative review of the literature to explore the role embedded researchers might play in improvement efforts in healthcare. They examined publications focusing on embedded research approaches, both within and outside healthcare.