

Rebecca Kearney - Physiotherapist/ Associate Professor



I had an interest in evidenced based practice and wanted to increase my understanding of what that meant. To achieve this I self-funded my MSc studies. My MSc introduced me to the research gaps in my clinical profession, which led onto a 'Versus Arthritis' funded PhD. This provided me with the foundations of my research training. But I was a physiotherapist at my core and felt passionate about the value clinical academics could bring to both NHS and Higher Education Institution (HEI) organisations, to ultimately design and deliver high quality research to improve the health of the nation.

In 2013 I successfully obtained an National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Lectureship. This was my first joint clinical academic appointment and a real turning point in my career trajectory. Up to this point I had spent some time working as a physiotherapist and some time working as a researcher, but had never had the opportunity to integrate the two into one post. I had my one chance to justify my existence and value to the NHS and HEI employing organisations (University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust and the University of Warwick).

Six years later, I am still a clinical academic. I have been appointed the first non-medical 'Associate (Clinical) Professor' at Warwick Medical School (WMS) and obtained a further NIHR Fellowship. I'm currently working across eight multi-center Randomised Controlled Trials, representing £7M of NIHR and charity funding. Most importantly, I believe I am making significant steps forwards in evidence based practice.

So how did I get here? It has been a combination of being the type of person who does not accept what we are doing is 'the best'; being in an exceptional clinical and academic training environment; and surrounded by innovative and inspirational leads within UHCW and WMS, who have introduced me to the right networks. My story has one key turning point - the point I gained my NIHR Clinical Lectureship, without that opportunity the rest would not have followed.

