

Gordon McGregor - Clinical Exercise Physiologist/ Post-Doctoral Research Fellow



After 10 years working as a Clinical Exercise Physiologist in Cardiac Rehabilitation, I embarked on a part-time PhD in 2008. I had no idea that, ten years on, I would be supervising other Clinical Academics on their PhD journeys, and leading million-pound clinical trials. The role of a Clinical Academic Allied Health Professional is both challenging and rewarding. Your clinical work benefits from your research; your patients, your colleagues, and your clinical service as a whole, benefit from your research.

Doing a PhD whilst holding down a demanding clinical job is not a bed of roses, but stick it out, and your development as a practitioner and a researcher takes a giant leap. I was fortunate to have some clinical academic funding during the five-year PhD process. One thing led to another and I was awarded funding for a two-year post-doc from the Clinical Research Network (CRN) to investigate exercise training during haemodialysis. The snowball carried on rolling and, with support from the UHCW Interdisciplinary Clinical Academic Research Programme (INCA) with Coventry University, I continued to combine clinical and academic work, focusing on writing research grant applications. Finally, after 12 brutal rejection laden months, writing numerous grant applications with fantastic clinical, academic and R&D teams from UHCW Coventry and Warwickshire, I was successful with a £1.3 million NIHR grant to test exercise rehabilitation in pulmonary hypertension, a £190,000 BHF grant for exercise rehabilitation in Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, and a two-year clinical trials research scholarship from the CRN.

Not surprisingly, there is a lot of support and funding for non-medical clinical academics. The NHS clearly sees the value of upskilling its clinical workforce to drive quality and innovation in healthcare, to meet today's and tomorrow's clinical challenges. It's a thoroughly stimulating and rewarding career that allows you to develop evidence-based expertise in your field. If you have ideas about doing things better or differently, a clinical academic career may well be for you...

