

Martin Underwood—Professor



I started my career as a general practitioner. First in Lusaka and later in Manchester. Over time I became increasingly dissatisfied with my approach to treating the many people I saw with low back pain. There did not seem to be any clear guidance on what I should do. At this time I had enrolled for an MSc at Keele University where my mentor encouraged to have belief in my own ability to do research. I met physiotherapist who was passionate about improving care for people with low back pain. Together we developed my first randomised controlled trial that we ran within my own general practice. I also obtained a part time research fellowship from the Royal College of General Practitioners and I registered for my MD.

My mentor then encouraged to apply for a part-time job in the MRC unit in London. I got the job and this gave me the opportunity to work on my first big trial; the UK BEAM trial of back pain treatments. What I learnt from doing that study still underpins my research.

I subsequently obtained the NHS R&D fellowship to support me to develop my own research programme. I obtained a drawer full of rejected grant applications before getting my first big grant as chief investigator from the HTA programme to look at topical NSAIDs for knee osteoarthritis (TOIB).

In 2007 I moved to Warwick Medical School to join the Clinical Trial Unit and to further expand my research portfolio. Since coming to Warwick I have had several senior management roles in the Medical School. Until 2015 I continued to work one day per week in general practice to allow me to spend more time on my academic work; specifically working with UHCW to increase the portfolio of large NIHR studies running through the Trust. I am now working on large trials in orthopaedics and maternity care with colleagues from UHCW.

Nowadays the main focus of my work is to support the development of the next generation of researchers in Warwick Medical School and UHCW.

