

NCRI Head & Neck Group Priorities 2022 - 2025



NCRI Partners

NCRI is a UK-wide partnership between research funders working together to maximise the value and benefits of cancer research for the benefit of patients and the public. A key strength of NCRI is our broad membership with representation across both charity and government funders as well as across all four nations in the United Kingdom.



Introduction

The NCRI Groups bring the cancer research community together to develop practice-changing research, from basic to clinical research and across all cancer types, supporting NCRI's strategy. The NCRI Head & Neck Group is a multi-disciplinary community of researchers and consumers focused on issues relating to head and neck cancer research.

Each NCRI Group engages in a prioritisation process to identify the priority areas in its area of research (Appendix A). This process dictates the work of the group as well as providing an assessment of the state of research for the wider research community.

The NCRI Head & Neck Group has identified the research priorities for head and neck cancer, working with members of the head and neck cancer community, NCRI Partners, government bodies, funders and international organisations. Full details of the meetings held can be found in Appendix B and a list of participants can be found in Appendix C.

Priorities for head and neck cancer research:

1. Identify the optimal approach for collaboration between basic scientists, translational scientists, and clinicians to engage and collaborate in future head and neck cancer clinical trials.
2. Identify the gaps in salivary gland cancer research and develop strategic priorities for this area of research.
3. Improve outcomes for patients with locally advanced hypopharyngeal cancer.
4. Identify ways to improve outcomes for elderly and geriatric head and neck cancer patients and provide guidelines on how to achieve this.
5. Identify the barriers resulting in a lack of diversity in clinical trials and propose solutions to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion.

The NCRI Head & Neck Group will initially focus on priorities 1-4, forming time-limited working groups to address these priorities.



"The NCRI Head & Neck Group has been successfully supporting innovative clinical research from early phase to practice changing phase III studies and large observation projects. The group have developed an ambitious plan to approach the most challenging areas of unmet need in head and neck cancer, improve understanding of the underlying biology and ultimately improve outcomes for our patients."

Dr Martin Forster, Chair of the NCRI Head & Neck Group

NCRI Head & Neck Group working groups

Initial working groups in set up

Working group 1

Identify the optimal approach for collaboration between basic scientists, translational scientists, and clinicians to engage and collaborate in future head and neck cancer clinical trials.

This priority aims to develop a workshop and produce a position paper, with HPV as a possible topic, to encourage collaboration between clinicians and scientists to strengthen clinical trials and ultimately convert discovery science into patient benefit.

Working group 2

Identify the gaps in salivary gland cancer research and develop strategic priorities for this area of research.

By addressing this priority, we aim to improve outcomes for patients with rarer cancers, specifically salivary gland cancer by hosting a workshop. This working group will bring together researchers from across the community to host a strategy day to identify the most important unanswered research questions in the field and develop a set of strategic priorities for future salivary gland cancer research.

Working group 3

Improve outcomes for patients with locally advanced hypopharyngeal cancer.

This priority aims to improve outcomes for locally advanced hypopharyngeal cancer patients by designing a study that will deliver direct patient benefit to a patient population with current unmet need.

Working group 4

Identify ways to improve outcomes for elderly and geriatric head and neck cancer patients and provide guidelines of how to achieve this.

This priority encourages a collaborative, cross-cutting endeavour to develop a strategy paper that will guide and inform researchers on improving outcomes for elderly and geriatric head and neck cancer patients, a patient population that is currently underserved in clinical trials.

Cross-cutting priority

Identify the barriers resulting in a lack of diversity in clinical trials and propose solutions to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Barriers resulting in a lack of diversity in clinical trials across cancer types has been raised as an issue in many of NCRI's discussions with researchers. For this reason, this priority will be addressed collaboratively in a working group comprising experts from across NCRI Groups. This priority aims to establish the reasons behind a lack of diversity in clinical trials and provide solutions to increase participation of a diverse cohort of patients in future studies. A working group will address the common issues across the board, as well as identifying cancer-type specific barriers, and produce guidelines on the steps to take to improve the inclusion of patients from a range of backgrounds into clinical trials from their inception. More details on this working group will be decided in due course.

Proposal guidance meetings

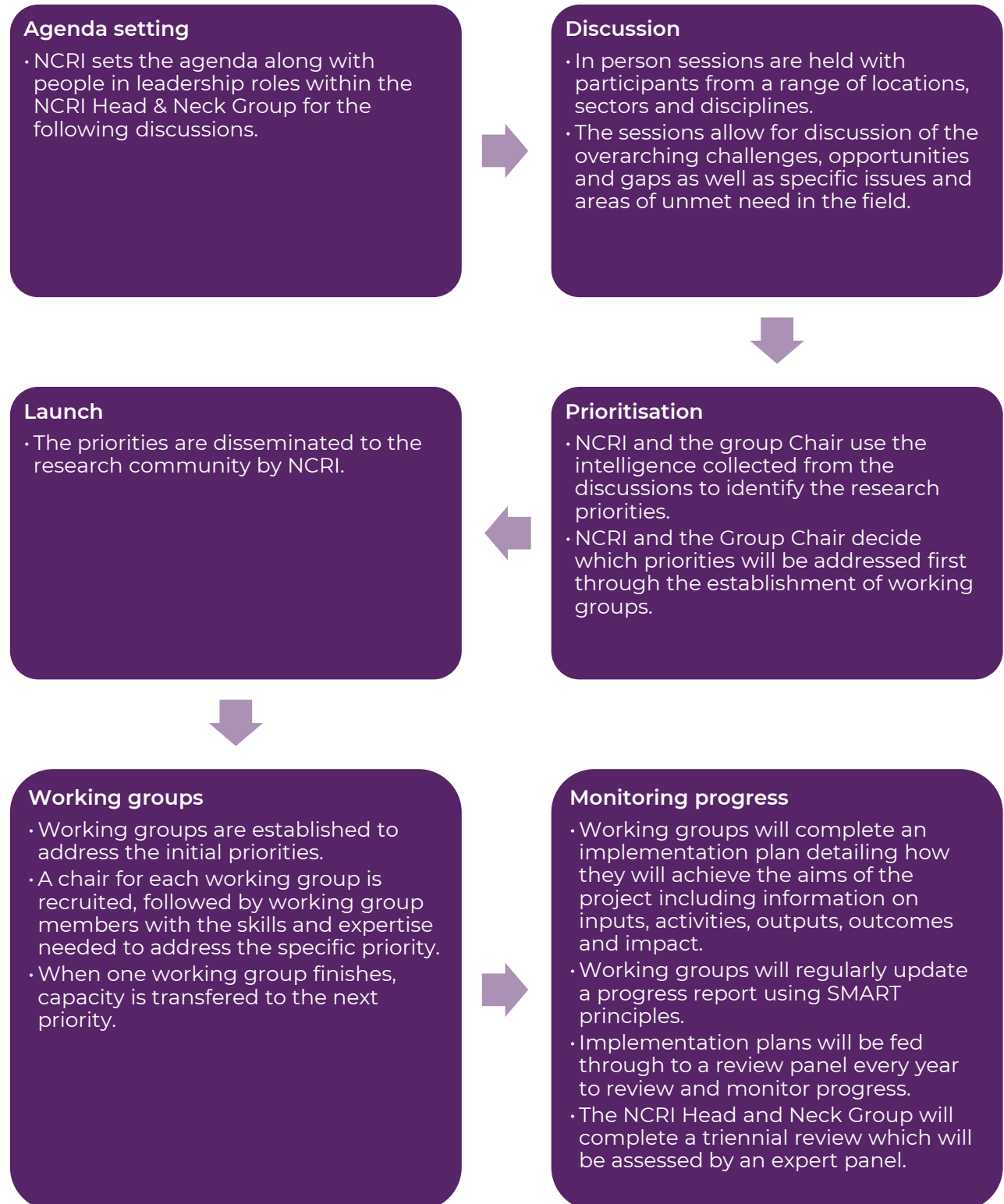
As well as group-specific priorities, proposal guidance meetings are embedded within the activities of each NCRI Group. These meetings are key in facilitating coordinated research and will be held regularly to support the wider head and neck cancer research community. By reviewing proposals relating to a breadth of treatments and tumour types and providing expert feedback, proposal guidance meetings allow the group broad oversight of the research in development and enable the identification of areas of unmet need which require more focus.

Next steps

Working groups addressing priorities 1-4 are currently being formed. These groups will be made up of the experts needed to address each research question. To be the first to hear about opportunities to join these working groups please sign up to the [NCRI Head & Neck Network](#). The progress of these working groups will be published in the annual reports and triennial review of the NCRI Head & Neck Group. These can be found on the [NCRI website](#). Members of the NCRI Head & Neck Network will also be updated periodically on the progress of the group.

Please [get in touch](#) if you have any questions or comments regarding this report or if you are interested in joining one of the [NCRI Networks](#), the [NCRI Consumer Forum](#) or our [NCRI Early Career Researcher Forum](#).

Appendix A
NCRI Head and Neck Group priority setting process



Appendix B

NCRI Head & Neck Group priority discussion sessions 2019-2021

The NCRI Head & Neck Group strategy day held in March 2019 attracted around 40 participants from a range of countries, sectors, and disciplines, including NCRI Consumer Forum members, early career researchers and NCRI Partners. The introductory session allowed for discussion of the overarching challenges, opportunities and gaps in head and neck cancer research, whilst the subsequent sessions addressed specific issues and areas of unmet need in the field. In a series of sessions experts exchanged ideas on the priorities of future research in this field, with each session involving researchers from wide ranging disciplines encouraging cross-cutting collaboration to meet the most pressing needs in head and neck cancer today.

Session 1: Introduction

Chair: Dr Martin Forster

Speakers:

- **Professor Jon Wadsley**, Weston Park Cancer Centre - NCRI Thyroid Subgroup
- **Dr Ioanna Nixon**, Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre – NCRI Epidemiology & Survivorship Subgroup
- **Dr Anthony Kong**, King's College London (KCL) – NCRI Systematic Therapy & Radiotherapy
- **Professor Jim McCaul**, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital – NCRI Surgery & Localised Therapies

Discussion topic:

- Opportunities and gaps across the subgroups

Session 2: Groups and opportunities

Speakers:

- **Professor Stefano Fedele**, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (UCLH) – Collaboration with the NIHR CRN Oral & Dental Group
- **Professor Christian Simon**, Centre hospitalier universitaire Vaudois (CHUV) – EORTC: research opportunities
- **Dr Mererid Evans**, Velindre Cancer Centre – Tips on how to collaborate with the EORTC from a CI's perspective
- **Professor Steven Thomas**, University of Bristol – Head & Neck 5000: research opportunities
- **Professor Patrick Sheahan**, South Infirmery Victoria University Hospital and **Dr Richeal Ni Riordain**, Cork University Dental School & Hospital – Opportunities for Clinical Trial collaboration in Ireland
- **Ms Nicola Keat**, National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) – Cross-cutting NCRI Groups & structures

Session 3: NCRI Head & Neck Group future strategy

Breakout group topics:

- Qualitative tools and survivorship
- Translational research, biobanking and tissues
- Observational study and cohort studies
- Rarer cancers

Appendix C

Strategy day and NCRI Head & Neck Group contributors:

Chair - Dr Martin

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