**PhD project title**
The Impact of Work on Patient, Staff and System Outcomes within a newly implemented, integrated and Digitally Supported Musculoskeletal Health Service

**Supervisors**
Dr. Carolyn Axtell & Prof. Jeremy Dawson

**Research centre**
Institute of Work Psychology

**Project description**
This research examines the impact of integrated health service provision at three levels: patient, staff and service outcomes. This is important given the strategic objective within the NHS to promote integrated care that aligns medical and non-medical services. However, the outcomes of introducing such provision has been under-examined and may involve different outcomes at different levels. This research therefore advances knowledge on the outcomes of integration and the implications for future service enhancement.

The non-medical intervention of interest to the current research is the impact of good quality work. Being engaged in appropriate and good quality employment could help with patient recovery as work is an important influence in individual wellbeing. Being fit enough to work can also be a marker of successful treatment but is often neglected in healthcare outcome evaluation. Therefore, examining employment in the context of patient journeys, either as an enabler or an outcome, can help identify areas where integrated service provision might be enhanced.

However, to fully understand the implications of enhancements to service provision, it is important to examine how such changes impact on staff and the wider healthcare system. Integration is often facilitated by technology and involves significant reform of service delivery. Such changes may affect staff and patients differently, and influence service components in distinct ways. In addition, such changes may impact access to services with the resulting effects on capacity, demand and staff workload.

Thus, this research focuses on two questions:

1) What is the impact of employment in patient recovery and what implications does this have for future integrated service delivery?

2) What is the impact of health service integration and change on patients, staff, and service outcomes?

The research will be conducted in collaboration with MSK Sheffield. This is an appropriate context as it involves a new, digitally supported, integrated, whole-system musculoskeletal (MSK) service, serving 44,000 patients pa. Their digital platform enables tailored questionnaires/outcome measures to be sent direct to patients and allows data to be analysed at patient, group and service level. The first research question will involve augmenting and using this quantitative data. The second research question will involve a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The PhD student will benefit from a collaborative formal and on-the-job training package providing them with both research skills training and knowledge, and also practical skills that will enhance the student’s employability after the PhD. The training will be provided through three primary routes, from activities and training offered via 1) Sheffield University Management School, 2) Sheffield Doctoral Development Programme and 3) MSK Sheffield (the partner organisation).
Training provided by MSK Sheffield/NHS will include both the induction programme (e.g., information security, confidentiality, safeguarding, health & safety), and specific training to provide the student with the necessary skills to extract and analyse patient data. In addition, the student will also be provided with Good Clinical Practice training, which will be necessary to acquire the Research Passport which allows this access to data and to research participants. The research can be partially configured as an internship in and of itself, as the student will be working alongside members of the administration, management and clinical team comprising the MSK Sheffield service when accessing data and for data preparation. MSK Sheffield are very keen on developing a close working relationship with the student and see this as integral to conducting good research within the NHS. An unpaid internship (for 3 months in the first year) will be provided to orientate the student to MSK Sheffield and to enable them to gain the required skills to complete the project (thus gaining valuable and transferable professional experience). As well as the two academic supervisors listed above, this project will involve a supervisor internal to Sheffield MSK (Dr. Rachel Tattersall) who will provide support and guidance.

Suggested References


PhD candidate profile
The PhD candidate should meet the following requirements:

- Be enthusiastic, well-organised and have good inter-personal skills.
- High motivation and a keen interest in the research area and with good quantitative and qualitative analysis skills.
- A first degree that is equivalent to a UK classification of upper second class honours or above. In addition, a good masters level qualification of merit or above, with a minimum of 60 per cent in the dissertation, research project element or equivalent experience. For this particular project an MSc in Work Psychology, Research Methods or Economics would be especially relevant. We also accept an MBA from an accredited school where the candidate can demonstrate that a significant research element has been undertaken. Applicants must also meet our English language requirements. For further information on entry requirements, please see: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply

Start dates
We have two start dates a year for PhD students. We strongly recommend that students start on 1 October as this makes it easier for students to attend compulsory training. However, we do recognise that not everyone will be able to commence studies at that time, so we also offer a second start date of 1 February.

Closing date for applications
Applications will be considered until a suitable candidate has been identified. For the 1 October start date, a full application must have been received by 15 July. For 1 February start date, a full application must have been received by 15 November.

How to apply
See http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply for full details of how to apply.

For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact: Dr. Carolyn Axtell, at c.m.axtell@sheffield.ac.uk.