

Tuesday, 18 January 2011

Treatment of around 20,000 people who suffer major trauma each year is set to improve as the Government announces significant new investment into trauma and microbiology research. The Department of Health, the Ministry of Defence, University Hospitals Birmingham and University of Birmingham are investing £20 million in a new initiative to share medical lessons learned. The initiative will bring both military and civilian trauma surgeons and scientists together to share innovation in medical research and advanced clinical practice in the battlefield to benefit all trauma patients in the NHS at an early stage of injury.

The new National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) for surgical reconstruction and microbiology will be set up at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, where all injured service personnel are currently treated after evacuation from the frontline in Afghanistan.

Research will focus initially on today's most urgent challenges in trauma including:

- identifying effective resuscitation techniques;
- surgical care after multiple injuries or amputation; and
- fighting wound infections.

For every trauma fatality in England, there are two people who are left with severe and often permanent injuries. Currently, variable research into trauma care means advances are not always shared across the NHS. The new NIHR centre will form a central point in England for trauma research where knowledge can be translated into real improvements in care for all NHS patients and beyond. It will be the first and only research centre of its kind in the UK to focus both on military and civilian care and treatment.

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said:

"The new NIHR Centre will fund world-leading research to help people recover better and faster from severe injuries. There have already been significant developments in advanced emergency treatment and transportation but more medical research is needed.

"This investment will help to strengthen the response of health and emergency services to major disasters such as road traffic accidents and terrorist attacks in the future. It will also help to make the NHS leaders in the world of trauma care - helping to improve treatment and care in the NHS and around the world. This investment also reflects our commitment to health research in the strongest possible way."

Defence Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Andrew Robathan said:

"The medics who work for our Armed Forces are recognised the world over for pioneering new advances in trauma care and quite rightly so. Those who have been injured defending their country deserve the very best standards of care. I am proud that the MoD is investing £10 million in the new NIHR Centre, which will allow us to develop new techniques to treat our soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and allow military surgeons to share our skills and knowledge with the NHS."

Professor Dame Sally C. Davies, Director General of Research and Development at the Department of Health and (interim) Chief Medical Officer said:

"I am delighted to be establishing the new NIHR Centre for Surgical Reconstruction and Microbiology, in collaboration with our partners in the Ministry of Defence and in Birmingham, which will be unique in this country.

"Translational research efforts are needed to target the early phase of injury in order to develop

novel therapies and interventions for pre-hospital and early in-hospital trauma care. The cross-learning fostered between the military and civilian health care settings will improve treatment options and care for all patients".

The Surgeon General, Surgeon Vice Admiral Philip Raffaelli said:

"This is a hugely important initiative building on the strong partnership between the MoD and DH. The new centre will play a key role in building scientific evidence from injuries sustained in both military and civilian environments. All our patients will benefit now and in the future as new treatments are developed and shared across the NHS and the military."

Julie Moore, Chief Executive, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust:

"We are delighted to become the UK's only NIHR Centre for Surgical Reconstruction and Microbiology. It is recognition of the work undertaken by the Trust and our partners over a number of years. It will provide us with the opportunity to build academic knowledge around pioneering clinical innovations, often performed for the first time to save lives and limbs. It will also allow us to use and develop basic science techniques to then critically examine and translate into clinical practice for the benefits of patients."

Giving the centre the best possible clinical direction from the start will be its interim chair Professor Sir Keith Porter, who is the UK's only Professor of Clinical Traumatology and has developing world-class treatment for injured military servicemen and women for the past 10 years.

Many more people survive injuries, when not so long ago they would have died due to the rapid loss of blood and severe trauma. Overcoming severe limb, head, face, burn injuries and infections can take years to treat requiring lifelong rehabilitation.

The nature of military injuries are often very complex and can in some cases require years of after care and rehabilitation.

The funding will offer researchers and medical students at the University unprecedented opportunities to work and learn with the very best in their field.