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Challenges, opportunities for involving patients and the public in acute antimicrobial medicine development research: an interview study

Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2018-024918
Article Type:	Communication article
Date Submitted by the Author:	20-Jun-2018
Complete List of Authors:	Gibson, Andy; University of the West of England, Health and Social Sciences Kok, Michele; University of the West of England, Health and Social Sciences Evans, David; University of West England, Grier, Sally; Southmead Hospital MacGowan, Alasdair; Southmead Hospital
Primary Subject Heading:	
Secondary Subject Heading:	
Keywords:	antimicrobial research, patient and public involvement, challenges and opportunities

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Manuscripts

Challenges, opportunities for involving patients and the public in acute antimicrobial medicine development research: an interview study

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Word count: 4351

Abstract

Objectives: To explore what approaches to patient and public involvement (PPI) in antimicrobial drug development are currently being utilised, what are the impacts of PPI on antimicrobial medicine development and what are the barriers to its implementation?

Design: Interview study

Setting: Antimicrobial drug development research

Participants: Principal investigators known to have led studies involving PPI or expressed an interest in PPI.

Results: there is very little published work on public involvement in antimicrobial research. Individual interviewees expressed scepticism about the contribution that PPI could make to different stages of the drug development life cycle but collectively identified a range of potential benefits of PPI covering most stages of the medicine development process.

Conclusions: A major issue in developing PPI in antimicrobial medicine development research will be in overcoming the view that, at best, PPI has only a marginal contribution to make in this area of research. The findings from this study, although

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3 mixed, suggest that well designed PPI has an untapped potential to enhance
4 antimicrobial research.
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7 **Key Words**

8 Antimicrobial research, patient and public involvement, challenges and opportunities,
9 acute infections.
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13 **Article Summary**

- 14 • The paper presents new information on what approaches to PPI in anti-
15 microbial drug development are currently being utilised, the impacts that these
16 approaches are having, and barriers to implementing these approaches
- 17 • Our interview sample is small and may not be representative of researchers in
18 the antimicrobial research community as a whole.
- 19 • It is possible that our sample is biased and represents a partial view of the
20 issues discussed but it is unlikely that the issues raised are unique to our
21 interviewees.
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28 **Background: Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in health research**

29 There is a rapidly growing interest in patient and public involvement (PPI) in health
30 research. INVOLVE, a UK based advisory group on PPI funded by the National
31 Institute for Health Research (NIHR), defines involvement as research being carried
32 out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them¹. This is
33 distinct from either disseminating information about research to the public or people
34 participating as subjects of the research. Examples include acting as joint grant
35 holders or co-applicants on a research project, involvement in identifying research
36 priorities, participating as members of a project advisory or steering group,
37 commenting on and developing patient information leaflets or other
38 research materials, and users and/or carers themselves carrying out research.
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42 PPI is advocated on several grounds - it helps ensure that health research is
43 conducted ethically, it improves the quality of research design and it helps in the
44 production of research findings which address patient and public concerns.
45 Underlying these claims is the assertion that PPI provides access to an additional
46 source of knowledge, i.e. experiential knowledge, which is different to, but equally as
47 important as, scientific or professional knowledge, in carrying out health research².
48
49

50 PPI is an international movement, with comparable initiatives in other countries. In
51 the US, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute ([PCORI](#)) is a major
52 source of research funding, focused on question generation, patient-centred clinical
53 effectiveness research, and broad dissemination. Canadian has the Strategy for
54 Patient Orientated Research ([SPOR](#)) and the Consumer and Community Health
55 Research Forum in Australia ([Involving People in Research](#)) includes consumer-
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3 based research and a strong consumer knowledge base. There are also more
4 targeted interventions such as the European Patients' Academy on Therapeutic
5 Innovation ([EUPATI](#)) which aims to increase the number of patients who are
6 knowledgeable of the medicines development process and therefore able to act as e
7 effective advocates and advisors in medicines research.
8

9 Evidence of PPI in bid development and research plans is now a requirement for
10 many UK-based medical research funding bodies. In Europe the Innovative Medicine
11 Initiative ([IMI](#)) is placing a much stronger emphasis on the importance of PPI in
12 health research.
13

14 There has been much debate about the correct terminology to use when referring to
15 members of the public who are involved in designing and carrying out research. In
16 this paper, we use the term 'public contributors' to cover people who may have had
17 direct experience of an infection, their carers, and members of the public who may
18 have a more general interest in antimicrobial research.
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22 **PPI in Acute Antimicrobial Medicine Research**

23 Despite the trend towards increasing PPI in research there has apparently been
24 relatively little interest in public involvement in antimicrobial research. Several
25 authors of this paper (DE, AG, SG, AM) were involved in carrying out a systematic
26 review to identify the extent, quality and impact of PPI in antimicrobial drug
27 development research³. No relevant studies were found, apart from one protocol
28 paper with a brief mention of PPI.
29
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31

32 There may be a number of reasons for this state of affairs. One is that researchers
33 involved in antimicrobial research may be unaware of the potential benefits of PPI.
34 There is a growing evidence base for the positive impacts of PPI on research. This
35 includes impacts on setting the research agenda, intervention development,
36 choosing outcome measures, data collection, analysis of data and writing up and
37 dissemination^{4, 5}. However, there is little consensus on the aims, methodology and
38 appropriate outcome measures for evaluating PPI. This partly reflects the different
39 requirements of funders, researchers and public contributors in developing evidence
40 of the benefits of PPI, which in turn makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.
41
42

43 Another barrier might be the biomedical nature of much of the research. It may be
44 felt that there is less scope for PPI to beneficially impact on laboratory based
45 research, as opposed to more applied health services research. That being said
46 there are well documented cases of user involvement in other types of drug
47 development research, perhaps the most notable being Epstein's work on the
48 development of the relationship and interaction between AIDS activists and AIDS
49 research⁶.
50
51

52 The example of AIDS activism is helpful but the focus in this paper is on acute,
53 rather than chronic infections, which leads us to one final, and perhaps, crucial issue,
54 the temporary nature of most microbial infections. With many long term conditions,
55 there are well established patient groups that have advocated for the rights of their
56
57

members to be heard in decisions about service provision and research that affects them. The AIDS activism mentioned above is one example, but groups representing people with mental health problems, physical disabilities and chronic conditions such as diabetes also spring to mind. The existence of these groups and networks make it easier for researchers to contact appropriate patients and carers and involve them in their work. In contrast there are few, if any groups, representing people who have experienced microbial infections. People who have experienced infections are perhaps less likely to develop an ongoing identification with their illness, in the way that someone might identify themselves as disabled.

Furthermore, the long term nature of some conditions makes it possible for researchers to build more sustained relationships with these patients across the life time of a project, leading to more substantial involvement. Patients often experience acute bacterial infection as a one-off experience which is either successfully treated with antibiotics or may be fatal. Thus, involving patients in research on treating certain types of infections may be more problematic. What was unknown at the beginning of this study was the extent to which researchers were able to overcome these barriers and successfully involve patients in antimicrobial drug development research.

The authors of this paper are part of a larger European programme of research to develop new antimicrobial agents (COMBACTE-MAGNET). Combatting bacterial resistance in Europe –molecules against Gram negative infections (www.combacte.com): A consortium seeking new ways of treating multi-resistant bacterial infections. The authors have the responsibility to encourage the development of PPI within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme and are based in in Work Package 6I. It is therefore important to identify any relevant work on PPI in antimicrobial research that could be built on for the programme.

Our aims were therefore to identify any relevant PPI work taking place in antimicrobial research within the UK or elsewhere within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme and to collect data on the approaches to PPI used and the impact of PPI.

Research Questions:

1. What approaches to PPI in antimicrobial drug development are currently being utilised?
2. What are the impacts of PPI on antimicrobial medicine development and what are the barriers to its implementation?

Research design

The majority of the data were collected by means of telephone interview. Telephone interviews were chosen because the potential participants were geographically dispersed, based in the UK, the US, Vietnam and mainland Europe. The numbers of people we were able to identify carrying out PPI in antimicrobial research were also

1
2
3 relatively small. It was therefore possible to interview all our potential participants.
4 Telephone interviews also offered as a practical way to develop a more detailed
5 understanding of the process and outcomes of PPI in antimicrobial research than
6 would be possible using other methods such as a questionnaire.
7

8 *Population and sample*

9
10 The population was researchers involved in antimicrobial research within the UK and
11 the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme. Potential interviewees were identified
12 through our contacts within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme. We also
13 contacted INVOLVE to identify potential contacts. We had hoped that a rapid review
14 of the literature in this area of work would yield some contacts³.
15

16 We had originally planned to carry out a purposive sample of identified contacts, but
17 because we were only able to identify a small number of people to participate, all
18 identified contacts were interviewed. The people identified were principal
19 investigators (PIs) who were known to our team. We interviewed nine people in total
20 - five were based in the UK, one was based in Vietnam but the interview related to
21 work carried out in the UK, one based in the US, one in Switzerland and one in the
22 Netherlands. All of the researchers who had carried out work in the UK had
23 experience of PPI in their research projects. It transpired that the three non UK
24 interviewees did not have experience of carrying out PPI but did have opinions on
25 the potential benefits of PPI. We have included their comments in this study because
26 they illustrate some of the barriers to developing PPI in antimicrobial research.
27
28

29 *Data collection*

30
31 Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. The interviews were
32 structured to obtain the following information:
33

- 34 • Skills or previous background in PPI
- 35 • Perceived value of PPI in antimicrobial drug development research
- 36 • Where in the drug development process PPI is carried out
- 37 • Recruitment and maintenance of PPI groups
- 38 • Methods of involvement
- 39
- 40

41 During the interviews issues specific to a particular research project were pursued,
42 where they were relevant to the aims of this paper.
43

44 *Patient Involvement*

45
46 This paper is part of a larger project on patient involvement in antimicrobial drug
47 development which includes the development of a toolkit for public involvement in
48 antimicrobial medicine development. The work of the project is guided by members
49 of the Patient and Public Involvement Panel for Antimicrobial Drugs (PPIPAD).
50 Members of the panel agreed that exploring the attitudes of researchers to patient
51 and public involvement in antimicrobial drug development was an important issue to
52 investigate.
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Ethical Approval

Ethical approval to carry out this study was obtained from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of West England. Informed consent was obtained before interviews commenced.

Data analysis

The data was analysed thematically to identify common issues and concerns related to patient and public involvement as identified by our interviewees. The results are presented following these themes as follows:

- Responsibility for carrying out PPI
- Basis for public involvement
- Time and resource implications
- Recruitment of public contributors
- PPI activities undertaken
- Value added
- Main barriers to public involvement

Results

Responsibility for carrying out PPI

As stated above, three of our interviewees were interested in the potential contribution of PPI but had no experience of doing PPI. The other five interviewees were responsible for ensuring that PPI work was carried out in their projects in line with any commitments made in their original funding applications. However, in practice, responsibility for PPI was usually delegated to a specific member of the team who was accountable for the day-to-day running of PPI activities.

Basis for public involvement

It is common in the literature on involvement to argue that public contributors possess important 'lived experience' of a particular condition which needs to be considered, alongside other forms of knowledge, e.g. professional and scientific, when designing research⁷. However, in antimicrobial research we are dealing with acute infections which people may not have experienced before, unless they are suffering from an underlying chronic problem such as HIV. This, combined with the laboratory based nature of antimicrobial research, led to a questioning of the value of PPI by some of our interviewees. As one of our study participants put it, "*I don't think patients have any major role to play, honestly.*" (interview one)

However, other interviewees did not feel that this lack of 'lived experience' of a condition disqualified public contributors from being able to add value to antimicrobial research. The ability to provide an "*alternative perspective*" was seen as important. One of our interviewees, for example, talked about his experience of involving young people in the running of trials related to vaccination programmes. Not only did they

gain valuable information about the best time and place to contact potential participants, the young people involved also acted as “research ambassadors”, explaining the relevance and importance of participating in research to other young people and helping to create a, “*research engaged community*”.(interview three)

Furthermore, this interviewee felt that involvement of this kind,

“Empowers researchers to know that they are taking the views of our research subjects into account in terms of the importance of our research and the way that we do it.”

It was notable that the interviewees with some direct experience of PPI were generally more positive about the potential of PPI to aid their research than those with none.

Time and resources

The need to allocate adequate time and resources for PPI was noted by interviewees. At a minimum, a budget is required to pay for the expenses of public contributors. It was also acknowledged that building relationships with a group of public contributors takes time but, as one interviewee noted, “*Much less time or trouble than working with clinical contributors.*” (interview two)

The need for time and resources was not necessarily seen as a problem, particularly if justified by clear benefits from PPI. However, one interviewee did raise concerns about PPI adding, “*an additional layer of bureaucratic complications*” (interview one)

None of the interviewees provided formal training and support on involvement to their public contributors, although most provided informal support, for example by explaining a particular research project and the planned role of public contributors.

Nevertheless, one interviewee was sceptical of the value that public contributors could add without significant training and support because of the complexity of the issues raised by antimicrobial resistance and the development of new drugs to combat this. He felt that what was needed was,

“... a well-educated elite representing patient groups who understand what we are talking about” (interview eight)

His concern was that this would be difficult to achieve given the short term nature of acute infections.

Recruitment

Recruitment was seen as a major problem by several interviewees because of the acute nature of most infections and the lack of easily identifiable patient groups to work with.

In most examples where PPI had taken place, contributors were recruited via pre-existing involvement networks and contacts. As one interviewee put it, we, “*beg, borrow or steal*”. (interview four). Only one of the interviewees had set up a public advisory group specifically for antimicrobial research projects - this was a relatively

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3 recent innovation and was seen as a way of dealing with recruitment difficulties.
4 (interview four).

5
6 Furthermore, several interviewees said that they regularly worked with an informal
7 group of public contributors across different projects. One interviewee said that they
8 drew on a group of approximately ten people to work with on various projects since
9 2010 (interview two).

10
11 It can clearly be beneficial and time efficient to work with public contributors with
12 whom the researchers had already established a working relationship. This may also
13 be a way of coping with the difficulty of engaging with this group of patients as noted
14 earlier in this paper. One interviewee also commented about the potential difficulties
15 caused by people dropping out of activities due to illness (interview two). Having a
16 core group to work with may help to minimise the impact of this kind of problem.

17
18 However there were some concerns raised about how 'representative' public
19 contributors were. One interviewee talked about most public contributors being,
20 "*White, middle class types*" (interview one) and another commented on the problem
21 of bias, i.e. that public contributors may have personal interests which they may wish
22 to pursue through their involvement in research (interview two).

23
24 One interviewee (interviewee seven) described the very valuable contribution made
25 by one public contributor but was concerned that this person had a very specific
26 interest and motivation to become involved in the research which was not
27 representative of the general population. This was particularly pronounced since
28 other public contributors dropped out during the lifetime of the project leaving this
29 person as the sole public contributor

30 31 32 *PPI Activities*

33
34 Despite the scepticism expressed by some as to the value of public involvement in
35 antimicrobial research, interviewees described a wide range of activities that public
36 contributors had undertaken in their research. These included, advising on
37 confidentiality issues related to bioinformatics, guideline development for the use of
38 antimicrobials, research agenda setting, preparing ethics applications, reviewing
39 interview schedules, writing lay summaries, selecting outcome measures and
40 involvement in planning and running trials. Many of these examples resonate with
41 reports on the role that PPI plays in other forms of research^{4,5}.

42
43 However, there were some potential areas of PPI work in antimicrobial research that
44 are not reflected in this broader literature. One interviewee talked about the
45 importance of PPI in making judgements about the "*trade-off between toxicity and*
46 *efficacy*" (interview eight) and another talked about the importance of working with
47 patients and carers to design dosage regimes.

48
49 Another potential area for PPI to make a contribution, identified by two interviewees,
50 is that of antimicrobial stewardship. Although this occurs after the drug development
51 process and is therefore outside the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that
52 altering prescribing practice involves changing the behaviour of both clinicians and
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3 patients. Designing effective interventions to achieve this is likely to require the
4 involvement of both parties.

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6 Many of these activities described above were carried out face face-to-face, in
7 workshops or project meetings. Some activities, for example amending information
8 sheets, were often carried out via e-mail.

9 10 *Value added*

11
12 There was a wide range of views among our interviewees on the value of PPI in
13 antimicrobial research. In some cases, the contribution was seen as “*minimal*” and at
14 best contributing a “*subjective insight*”. One interviewee saw public involvement as,
15 “*a lot of the time pointless*”, and as only relevant for a “*fraction of the time*” (interview
16 one)

17
18 However, another interviewee commented that, “*PPI is required at all stages (of a*
19 *research project)*” but that “*PPI has most impact at the planning stage*” as it “*...can*
20 *be a really good informal check that there is clarity of purpose*” (interview four).

21
22 PPI was also seen as helpful in dealing with operational concerns as they “*crop up.*”
23 (interview two). One interviewee commented on how helpful public contributors can
24 be in advising on recruitment strategies for research projects and ensuring the
25 acceptability of research procedures and proposed interventions to research
26 participants. For example, one research project involved the use of anal swabs. The
27 public contributors were able to advise the researchers on how best to approach
28 potential participants and discuss this issue with them in a way that minimised
29 anxiety about the process, resulting in a significant boost to recruitment figures
30 (interview six).

31
32
33 There was evidence of acceptance, even among those more sceptical about the
34 benefits of PPI in setting the direction of research.

35
36 “*We should not do research because we as researchers think it is interesting to us*
37 *and which patients think is never going to benefit them.*” (interview eight)

38 39 *Main barriers to public involvement*

40
41 Some of the barriers to developing PPI in antimicrobial research, such as the lack of
42 clearly identifiable patient groups to work with and the technical nature of some of
43 the research, have already been commented on. Beyond this, it is clear from the
44 interview data that we have collected that PPI is a new concept in the world of
45 antimicrobial research. Several of our interviewees had only recently become aware
46 of it as a concept and were unclear about what it meant or how to put it into practice.
47 There was also scepticism about PPI’s specific contribution to antimicrobial
48 research.

49
50
51 For one interviewee, the main barrier to effective PPI is, “*Lack of knowledge and*
52 *experience of the area*”. He commented that from his experience the impact of PPI
53 had been variable and this was related to the variable quality of PPI practice and
54 facilitation. He saw this as a result of the PPI field being, “*relatively immature*”. As he
55 put it, “*we are all learning how to do it*” (interview 4). These comments could apply to
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1
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3 the general development of PPI in research but are particularly relevant to the area
4 of antimicrobial research. It may be inferred from these comments that as skill and
5 expertise are developed in carrying out PPI in antimicrobial research, the beneficial
6 impacts will increase. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the
7 PPI community.
8
9

10 11 **Discussion**

12
13 Although very little has been published about PPI in antimicrobial research our small
14 study suggests that, at least in the UK context, significant PPI work is taking place,
15 although this work is rarely written up for publication. This experience, although
16 mixed, suggest that despite some initial scepticism, many researchers have found
17 PPI beneficial to their work. As one UK based interviewee put it, *"Now that we do it I*
18 *wouldn't be without it"*.
19

20
21 The greater uptake of PPI in the UK may simply reflect the fact that many research
22 funders have made evidence of PPI a prerequisite for a successful application,
23 although this begs the question, why have many UK funders taken this stance in the
24 first place? There has been some preliminary work done on different 'cultures of
25 involvement' in different parts of Europe⁸. This may be an issue that is worthy of
26 further exploration and will need to be taken in to account if PPI is to be implemented
27 successfully in different regions of Europe.
28

29
30 Most of the PPI activity described by our interviewees related to the design and
31 running of clinical trials. The contribution that PPI could make to laboratory based
32 research was absent, although PPI in this area could play a significant role in helping
33 researchers to develop transparency, accountability and communication of their work
34 to the wider public. One of our interviewees suggested that substantial training would
35 be required before public contributors could be involved throughout the medicine
36 development process. EUPATI provide this kind of training and see it as essential to
37 enabling patients to act as effective advocates. However, some writers warn that an
38 unintended consequence of this training may be to create groups of patients who
39 identify too closely with the concerns of researchers rather than providing an
40 alternative patient perspective⁹.
41

42
43 Unease was also raised about the representativeness of potential public
44 contributors. This is an issue which has been widely debated in the PPI literature¹⁰.
45 It is important to keep in mind that what is required in PPI is not statistical
46 representativeness but what may be termed 'experiential representativeness', i.e.
47 representation of people with the experiential knowledge that is most relevant to the
48 work in hand. However, concerns that public contributors are drawn from a relatively
49 narrow section of society seem well founded and are reflected in the wider PPI
50 literature.
51

52
53 Some interviewees also seemed to view the potential benefits of PPI in relatively
54 narrow terms, i.e. solely related to experience of an infection which is transitory.
55 Unlike public contributors with chronic conditions, they did not see public contributors
56 in antimicrobial research as developing 'expertise' in their own illness. However,
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3 others saw the potential for public contributors to play a wider range of roles,
4 including acting as 'research ambassadors' and helping to create a more research
5 receptive public.
6

7 Given the potential time and energy required to locate and involve appropriate public
8 contributors in this area of work, the lack of clarity of the potential benefits of PPI,
9 and doubt about the ability of the public to engage with the issues, it is perhaps not
10 surprising that many researchers in this area appear not to prioritise PPI in their
11 work.
12

13 However, although individuals expressed scepticism about the contribution that PPI
14 could make to different stages of the drug development life cycle, collectively our
15 interviewees identified a range of potential benefits of PPI covering most stages of
16 the medicine development process. However, the lack of published work in this area,
17 there has been little opportunity for the researchers leading PPI to share and learn
18 from each other's experiences.
19
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21 22 23 **Strengths and Limitations**

24 Our interview sample is small and is in no way representative of researchers in the
25 antimicrobial research community. However, our aim was not to map PPI activity in
26 antimicrobial research, but to ascertain what approaches to PPI in antimicrobial drug
27 development are currently being utilised, the impacts that these approaches are
28 having, and barriers to implementing these approaches - this, we were able to do.
29 While it is possible that our sample is biased and represents a partial view of the
30 issues discussed, it is unlikely that the issues are unique to our interviewees. In fact,
31 many of the issues raised are recognisable in the wider PPI literature^{4,5}.
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35

36 37 **Concluding comments**

38 A major issue in developing PPI in antimicrobial medicine development research will
39 be in overcoming the view that, at best, PPI has only a marginal contribution to make
40 in this area of research. The findings from this study, although mixed, suggest that
41 well designed PPI has an untapped potential to enhance antimicrobial research. The
42 difficulty is in breaking the cycle of low expectations, leading to low investment,
43 leading to low impact and so on¹¹. In the UK, this cycle has begun to break down.
44 This has been brought about by, among other things, research funders making PPI a
45 mandatory part of grant applications. It may be that similar measures will need to be
46 adopted in Europe and elsewhere to break this cycle, although the possibility that
47 different attitudes to involvement may exist in different parts of Europe may also
48 need to be explored and taken in to account. However, it is clear that significant
49 knowledge about the benefits of PPI in antimicrobial research is already beginning to
50 be accumulated. Unfortunately this practice based knowledge is invisible to the wider
51 academic community because it has not been published.
52
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54

55 An important prerequisite for the future development of PPI in antimicrobial research
56 will be the provision of clear and easily accessible guidance to researchers in this
57

field on how to conduct PPI and the evidence of its benefits. Organisations like EUPATI have already made great strides in this direction. Furthermore, none of our interviewees expressed hostility to the concept of PPI but several remained to be convinced of its value. Reassuringly, it appears that the researchers with direct experience of PPI were also the most positive about its benefits. With this in mind, we leave the final word to one of our interviewees,

“Go in to it (PPI) with an open mind and be prepared to be surprised about how valuable it will be.”

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the members of PPIPAD for their help and support. We also like acknowledge Julie Gibbs (Research Administrator for Microbiology, NBT) for her invaluable practical input into supporting the PPIPAD.

Author Statement: AG, DE, SG and AM were involved in the developing the concept and design of the study. AG and MK collected the data. AG analysed the data. All authors were involved in drafting and revising the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding: This research project receives support from the Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking under grant agreement n° 115523 | 115620 | 115737 resources of which are composed of financial contribution from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) and EFPIA companies in kind contribution

Data statement: The data can be accessed by contacting the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interests: None declared

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BMJ Open

Challenges and opportunities for involving patients and the public in acute antimicrobial medicine development research: an interview study

Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2018-024918.R1
Article Type:	Communication article
Date Submitted by the Author:	21-Sep-2018
Complete List of Authors:	Gibson, Andy; University of the West of England, Health and Social Sciences Kok, Michele; University of the West of England, Health and Social Sciences Evans, David; University of West England, Grier, Sally; Southmead Hospital MacGowan, Alasdair; Southmead Hospital
Primary Subject Heading:	Patient-centred medicine
Secondary Subject Heading:	Infectious diseases
Keywords:	antimicrobial research, patient and public involvement, challenges and opportunities, acute infections

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Challenges, opportunities for involving patients and the public in acute antimicrobial medicines development research: an interview study

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Abstract

Objectives: To explore what approaches to patient and public involvement (PPI) in antimicrobial medicines development are currently being utilised, what are the impacts of PPI on antimicrobial medicines development and what are the barriers to its implementation?

Design: Interview study

Setting: Antimicrobial medicines development research

Participants: Principal investigators known to have led studies involving PPI or expressed an interest in PPI.

Results: There is very little published work PPI in antimicrobial research. Individual interviewees expressed scepticism about the contribution that PPI could make to different stages of the medicines development life cycle but collectively identified a range of potential benefits of PPI covering most stages of the medicines development process.

Conclusions: A major issue in developing PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research will be in overcoming the view that, at best, PPI has only a marginal contribution to make in this area of research. The findings from this study, although mixed, suggest that well designed PPI has an untapped potential to enhance antimicrobial research.

Key Words

Antimicrobial research, patient and public involvement, challenges and opportunities, acute infections.

Article Summary

- The paper presents new information on what approaches to PPI in anti-microbial medicines development are currently being utilised, the impacts that these approaches are having, and barriers to implementing these approaches.
- Our interview sample is small and may not be representative of researchers in the antimicrobial research community as a whole.
- It is possible that our sample is biased and represents a partial view of the issues discussed but it is unlikely that the issues raised are unique to our interviewees.

Background: Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in health research

There is a rapidly growing interest in patient and public involvement (PPI) in health research. INVOLVE, a UK based advisory group on PPI funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), defines involvement as research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them¹. This is distinct from either disseminating information about research to the public or people participating as subjects of the research. Examples include acting as joint grant holders or co-applicants on a research project, involvement in identifying research priorities, participating as members of a project advisory or steering group, commenting on and developing patient information leaflets or other research materials, and users and/or carers themselves carrying out research.

Within the literature there are ongoing discussions about what 'good' PPI looks like. In recent years the term 'coproduction' has gained prominence. These discussions reflect longer term concerns regarding the impact of entrenched power asymmetries between researchers and the public on the conduct and practice of involvement^{2,3,4}.

PPI is advocated on several grounds - it helps ensure that health research is conducted ethically, it improves the quality of research design and it helps in the production of research findings which address patient and public concerns. Underlying these claims is the assertion that PPI provides access to an additional source of knowledge, i.e. experiential knowledge, which is different to, but equally as important as, scientific or professional knowledge, in carrying out health research².

PPI is an international movement, with comparable initiatives in other countries. In the US, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute ([PCORI](#)) is a major source of research funding, focused on question generation, patient-centred clinical effectiveness research, and broad dissemination. The Strategy for Patient Orientated Research ([SPOR](#)) in Canada, and the Consumer and Community Health Research Forum ([Involving People in Research](#)) in Australia include consumer-based research and a strong consumer knowledge base. There are also more targeted interventions such as the European Patients' Academy on Therapeutic Innovation ([EUPATI](#)) which

1
2
3 aims to increase the number of patients who are knowledgeable of the medicines
4 development process and therefore able to act as effective advocates and advisors
5 in medicines research.
6

7 Evidence of PPI in bid development and research plans is now a requirement for
8 many UK-based medical research funding bodies. In Europe the Innovative
9 Medicines Initiative ([IMI](#)) places a strong emphasis on the importance of PPI in
10 health research.
11

12 There has been much debate about the correct terminology to use when referring to
13 members of the public who are involved in designing and carrying out research. In
14 this paper, we use the term 'public contributors' to cover people who may have had
15 direct experience of an infection, their carers, and members of the public who may
16 have a more general interest in antimicrobial research.
17

18 **PPI in Acute Antimicrobial Medicines Research**

19
20 Despite the trend towards increasing PPI in research there has apparently been
21 relatively little interest in public involvement in antimicrobial research. Several
22 authors of this paper (DE, AG, SG, AM) were involved in carrying out a systematic
23 review to identify the extent, quality and impact of PPI in antimicrobial drug
24 development research⁵. No relevant studies were found, apart from one protocol
25 paper with a brief mention of PPI. Given the rapidly growing international problem of
26 antimicrobial resistance, this is an important area of research and public concern in
27 terms of both the need to develop new antimicrobials and the stewardship of existing
28 antimicrobials⁶.
29
30

31 There may be a number of reasons why public involvement is not prominent in
32 antimicrobial research. One is that researchers involved in antimicrobial research
33 may be unaware of the potential benefits of PPI. There is a growing evidence base
34 for the positive impacts of PPI on research. This includes impacts on setting the
35 research agenda, intervention development, choosing outcome measures, data
36 collection, analysis of data and writing up and dissemination^{7, 8}. However, there is
37 little consensus on the aims, methodology and appropriate outcome measures for
38 evaluating PPI. This partly reflects the different requirements of funders, researchers
39 and public contributors in developing evidence of the benefits of PPI, which in turn
40 makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.
41
42
43

44 Another barrier might be the biomedical nature of much of the research. It may be
45 felt that there is less scope for PPI to beneficially impact on laboratory based
46 research, as opposed to more applied health services research. That being said
47 there are well documented cases of public involvement in other types of medicines
48 development research, perhaps the most notable being Epstein's work on the
49 development of the relationship and interaction between AIDS activists and AIDS
50 research⁹.
51

52 The example of AIDS activism is helpful but the focus in this paper is on acute,
53 rather than chronic infections, which leads us to one final, and perhaps, crucial issue,
54 the temporary nature of most microbial infections. With many long term conditions,
55 there are well established patient groups that have advocated for the rights of their
56
57

1
2
3 members to be heard in decisions about service provision and research that affects
4 them. The AIDS activism mentioned above is one example, but groups representing
5 people with mental health problems, physical disabilities and chronic conditions such
6 as diabetes also spring to mind. The existence of these groups and networks make it
7 easier for researchers to contact appropriate patients and carers and involve them in
8 their work. In contrast there are few, if any groups, representing people who have
9 experienced acute microbial infections. There are groups for conditions which may
10 make people prone to recurrent infections, e.g. bronchiectasis, chronic obstructive
11 pulmonary disease and cystic fibrosis. These are important groups to be aware of
12 but it should be borne in mind that people who suffer recurrent chronic infections due
13 to pre-existing diseases may have a different experience and knowledge of their
14 disease compared to those who experience a single and unexpected severe acute
15 infection.
16
17

18
19 The long term nature of some conditions also makes it possible for researchers to
20 build more sustained relationships with these patients across the life time of a
21 project, leading to more substantial involvement. Patients often experience acute
22 bacterial infection as a one-off experience which is either successfully treated with
23 antibiotics or may be fatal. Thus, involving patients in research on treating certain
24 types of infections may be more problematic. What was unknown at the beginning of
25 this study was the extent to which researchers were able to overcome these barriers
26 and successfully involve patients in antimicrobial medicines development research.
27

28
29 The authors of this paper are part of a larger European programme of research to
30 develop new antimicrobial agents (COMBACTE-MAGNET). Combatting bacterial
31 resistance in Europe –molecules against Gram negative infections
32 (www.combacte.com): A consortium seeking new ways of treating multi-resistant
33 bacterial infections. The authors have the responsibility to encourage the
34 development of PPI within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme and are based in
35 Work Package 6I. It is therefore important to identify any relevant work on PPI in
36 antimicrobial research that could be built on for the programme.
37

38
39 Our aims were therefore to identify any relevant PPI work taking place in
40 antimicrobial research within the UK or elsewhere within the COMBACTE-MAGNET
41 programme and to collect data on the approaches to PPI used and the impact of
42 PPI.
43

44 **Research Questions:**

- 45 1. What approaches to PPI in antimicrobial medicines development are currently
46 being utilised?
- 47 2. What are the impacts of PPI on antimicrobial medicines development and
48 what are the barriers to its implementation?
49

50 **Research Design**

51
52 The majority of the data were collected by means of telephone interviews. Telephone
53 interviews were chosen because the potential participants were geographically
54 dispersed, based in the UK, the US, Vietnam and mainland Europe. The numbers of
55 people we were able to identify carrying out PPI in antimicrobial research were also
56
57

1
2
3 relatively small. It was therefore possible to interview all our potential participants.
4 Telephone interviews also offered a practical way to develop a more detailed
5 understanding of the process and outcomes of PPI in antimicrobial research than
6 would be possible using other methods such as a questionnaire.
7

8 *Population and sample*

9
10 The population was researchers involved in antimicrobial research within the UK and
11 the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme. Potential interviewees were identified
12 through our contacts within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme. We also
13 contacted INVOLVE to identify potential contacts but without any success. We had
14 hoped that a rapid review of the literature in this area of work would yield some
15 contacts⁵.
16

17 We had originally planned to carry out a purposive sample of identified contacts, but
18 because we were only able to identify a small number of people to participate, all
19 identified contacts were interviewed. The people identified were all known to our
20 team. AM is an expert in this area of research and was particularly helpful in
21 identifying contacts and providing introductions. This was significant given the lack of
22 published literature to follow up or contacts from other sources. We interviewed nine
23 people in total - all were male principal investigators with established research track
24 records, five were based in the UK, one was based in Vietnam but the interview
25 related to work carried out in the UK, one based in the US, one in Switzerland and
26 one in the Netherlands. All of the researchers who had carried out work in the UK
27 had experience of PPI in their research projects. It transpired that the three non-UK
28 interviewees did not have experience of carrying out PPI but did have opinions on
29 the potential benefits of PPI. We have included their comments in this study because
30 they illustrate some of the barriers to developing PPI in antimicrobial research.
31
32
33

34 *Data collection*

35
36 Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach¹⁰. This approach
37 allowed us to ensure that important topics were covered while allowing the flexibility
38 for the interviewees to raise any issues they may have wished to. The interviews
39 were conducted by AG and MK and on average lasted twenty minutes. The topic
40 guide was structured to obtain the following information:
41
42

- 43 • Skills or previous background in PPI
- 44 • Perceived value of PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research
- 45 • Where in the medicines development process PPI is carried out
- 46 • Recruitment and maintenance of PPI groups
- 47 • Methods of involvement
- 48

49 The topic guide was developed by the authors and was informed by our wider
50 discussion with members of the Patient and Public Involvement Panel for
51 Antimicrobial Drugs (PPIPAD) at regular bi-monthly meetings.
52

53 In addition to the areas listed above issues specific to a particular research project
54 were pursued during the interviews, where they were relevant to the aims of this
55 paper.
56
57

Patient Involvement

This paper is part of a larger project on public involvement in antimicrobial medicines development which includes the development of a toolkit for PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research. The work of the project is guided by members of PPIPAD. Members of the panel confirmed that our research questions were important issues to investigate. Discussions with PPIPAD and the project team informed the development the interview schedule. PPIPAD members were not involved in recruitment to this study. We will discuss with PPIPAD the potential for further dissemination of the findings from this work.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval to carry out this study was obtained from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of the West of England. Informed consent was obtained before interviews commenced.

Data analysis

The data was analysed by AG. The approach to data analysis was guided by the work of Ritchie and Spencer¹¹. This approach was taken because it was designed with research related to policy issues in mind and because it allows for themes to be developed both inductively and deductively from the data, i.e. it was possible to explore topics that arose from our original research questions while remaining open to identifying issues and concerns related to PPI as identified by our interviewees.

The results are presented following the themes developed by the analysis process, as follows:

- Responsibility for carrying out PPI
- Basis for public involvement
- Time and resource implications
- Recruitment of public contributors
- PPI activities undertaken
- Value added
- Main barriers to public involvement

Results

Responsibility for carrying out PPI

As stated above, three of our interviewees were interested in the potential contribution of PPI but had no experience of doing PPI. The other five interviewees were responsible for ensuring that PPI work was carried out in their projects in line with any commitments made in their original funding applications. However, in practice, responsibility for PPI was usually delegated to a specific member of the team who was accountable for the day-to-day running of PPI activities.

Basis for public involvement

It is common in the literature on involvement to argue that public contributors possess important 'lived experience' of a particular condition which needs to be

1
2
3 considered, alongside other forms of knowledge, e.g. professional and scientific,
4 when designing research¹². However, in antimicrobial research we are dealing with
5 acute infections which people may not have experienced before. This, combined with
6 the laboratory based nature of antimicrobial research, led to a questioning of the
7 value of PPI by some of our interviewees. As one of our study participants put it, "*I*
8 *don't think patients have any major role to play, honestly.*" (interview one)
9

10 However, other interviewees did not feel that this lack of 'lived experience' of a
11 condition disqualified public contributors from being able to add value to antimicrobial
12 research. The ability to provide an "*alternative perspective*" was seen as important.
13 One of our interviewees, for example, talked about his experience of involving young
14 people in the running of trials related to vaccination programmes. Not only did they
15 gain valuable information about the best time and place to contact potential
16 participants, the young people involved also acted as "research ambassadors",
17 explaining the relevance and importance of participating in research to other young
18 people and helping to create a, "*research engaged community*".(interview three)
19

20 Furthermore, this interviewee felt that involvement of this kind,
21

22
23 "*Empowers researchers to know that they are taking the views of our research*
24 *subjects into account in terms of the importance of our research and the way that we*
25 *do it.*"
26

27 It was notable that the interviewees with some direct experience of PPI were
28 generally more positive about the potential of PPI to aid their research than those
29 with none.
30

31 *Time and resources*

32
33 The need to allocate adequate time and resources for PPI was noted by
34 interviewees. At a minimum, a budget is required to pay for the expenses of public
35 contributors. It was also acknowledged that building relationships with a group of
36 public contributors takes time but, as one interviewee noted, "*Much less time or*
37 *trouble than working with clinical contributors.*" (interview two)
38

39
40 The need for time and resources was not necessarily seen as a problem, particularly
41 if justified by clear benefits from PPI. However, one interviewee did raise concerns
42 about PPI adding, "*an additional layer of bureaucratic complications.*" (interview one)
43

44 None of the interviewees provided formal training and support on involvement to
45 their public contributors, although most provided informal support, for example by
46 explaining a particular research project and the planned role of public contributors.
47

48 Nevertheless, one interviewee was sceptical of the value that public contributors
49 could add without significant training and support because of the complexity of the
50 issues raised by antimicrobial resistance and the development of new medicines to
51 combat this. He felt that what was needed was,
52

53 "*... a well-educated elite representing patient groups who understand what we are*
54 *talking about*" (interview eight)
55

1
2
3 His concern was that this would be difficult to achieve given the short term nature of
4 acute infections.

5 6 *Recruitment of public contributors*

7
8 Recruitment was seen as a major problem by several interviewees because of the
9 acute nature of most infections and the lack of easily identifiable patient groups to
10 work with. It should be noted that this is not a problem unique to research in to acute
11 infections. Other forms of interaction with healthcare, e.g. emergency care, are
12 similarly episodic.

13
14 In most examples where PPI had taken place, contributors were recruited via pre-
15 existing involvement networks and contacts. As one interviewee put it, we, "*beg,*
16 *borrow or steal*" (interview four). Only one of the interviewees had set up a public
17 advisory group specifically for antimicrobial research projects - this was a relatively
18 recent innovation and was seen as a way of dealing with recruitment difficulties
19 (interview four).

20
21 Furthermore, several interviewees said that they regularly worked with an informal
22 group of public contributors across different projects. One interviewee said that they
23 drew on a group of approximately ten people to work with on various projects since
24 2010 (interview two).

25
26 It can clearly be beneficial and time efficient to work with public contributors with
27 whom the researchers had already established a working relationship. This may also
28 be a way of coping with the difficulty of engaging with this group of patients as noted
29 earlier in this paper. One interviewee also commented about the potential difficulties
30 caused by people dropping out of activities due to illness (interview two). Having a
31 core group to work with may help to minimise the impact of this kind of problem.

32
33 However there were some concerns raised about how 'representative' public
34 contributors were. One interviewee talked about most public contributors being,
35 "*White, middle class types*" (interview one) and another commented on the problem
36 of bias, i.e. that public contributors may have personal interests which they may wish
37 to pursue through their involvement in research (interview two).

38
39 One interviewee (interview seven) described the very valuable contribution made
40 by one public contributor but was concerned that this person had a very specific
41 interest and motivation to become involved in the research which was not
42 representative of the general population. This was particularly pronounced since
43 other public contributors dropped out during the lifetime of the project leaving this
44 person as the sole public contributor.

45 46 47 48 *PPI Activities*

49
50 Despite the scepticism expressed by some as to the value of public involvement in
51 antimicrobial research, interviewees described a wide range of activities that public
52 contributors had undertaken in their research. These included, advising on
53 confidentiality issues related to bioinformatics, guideline development for the use of
54 antimicrobials, research agenda setting, preparing ethics applications, reviewing
55 interview schedules, writing lay summaries, selecting outcome measures and
56

1
2
3 involvement in planning and running trials. Many of these examples resonate with
4 reports on the role that PPI plays in other forms of research^{7, 8}.

5
6 However, there were some potential areas of PPI work in antimicrobial research that
7 are not reflected in this broader literature. One interviewee talked about the
8 importance of PPI in making judgements about the *“trade-off between toxicity and*
9 *efficacy”* (interview eight) and another talked about the importance of working with
10 patients and carers to design dosage regimes.

11
12 Another potential area for PPI to make a contribution, identified by two interviewees,
13 is that of antimicrobial stewardship. Although this occurs after the drug development
14 process and is therefore outside the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that
15 altering prescribing practice involves changing the behaviour of both clinicians and
16 patients. Designing effective interventions to achieve this is likely to require the
17 involvement of both parties.

18
19
20 Many of these activities described above were carried out face-to-face, in workshops
21 or project meetings. Some activities, for example amending information sheets, were
22 often carried out via e-mail.

23 24 *Value added*

25
26 There was a wide range of views among our interviewees on the value of PPI in
27 antimicrobial research. In some cases, the contribution was seen as *“minimal”* and at
28 best contributing a *“subjective insight”*. One interviewee saw public involvement as,
29 *“a lot of the time pointless”*, and as only relevant for a *“fraction of the time”* (interview
30 one).

31
32 However, another interviewee commented that, *“PPI is required at all stages (of a*
33 *research project)”* but that *“PPI has most impact at the planning stage”* as it *“...can*
34 *be a really good informal check that there is clarity of purpose”* (interview four).

35
36 PPI was also seen as helpful in dealing with operational concerns as they *“crop up”*
37 (interview two). One interviewee commented on how helpful public contributors can
38 be in advising on recruitment strategies for research projects and ensuring the
39 acceptability of research procedures and proposed interventions to research
40 participants. For example, one research project involved the use of anal swabs. The
41 public contributors were able to advise the researchers on how best to approach
42 potential participants and discuss this issue with them in a way that minimised
43 anxiety about the process, resulting in a significant boost to recruitment figures
44 (interview six).

45
46
47 There was evidence of acceptance, even among those more sceptical about the
48 benefits of PPI in setting the direction of research.

49
50 *“We should not do research because we as researchers think it is interesting to us*
51 *and which patients think is never going to benefit them.”* (interview eight)

52 53 *Main barriers to public involvement*

54
55 Some of the barriers to developing PPI in antimicrobial research, such as the lack of
56 clearly identifiable patient groups to work with and the technical nature of some of
57

1
2
3 the research, have already been commented on. Beyond this, it is clear from the
4 interview data that we have collected that PPI is a new concept in the world of
5 antimicrobial research. Several of our interviewees had only recently become aware
6 of it as a concept and were unclear about what it meant or how to put it into practice.
7 There was also scepticism about PPI's specific contribution to antimicrobial
8 research.
9

10 For one interviewee, the main barrier to effective PPI is, "*Lack of knowledge and*
11 *experience of the area*". He commented that from his experience the impact of PPI
12 had been variable and this was related to the variable quality of PPI practice and
13 facilitation. He saw this as a result of the PPI field being, "*relatively immature*". As he
14 put it, "*we are all learning how to do it*" (interview 4). These comments could apply to
15 the general development of PPI in research but are particularly relevant to the area
16 of antimicrobial research. It may be inferred from these comments that as skill and
17 expertise are developed in carrying out PPI in antimicrobial research, the beneficial
18 impacts will increase. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the
19 PPI community.
20
21

22 Discussion

23 Although very little has been published about PPI in antimicrobial research our small
24 study suggests that, at least in the UK context, significant PPI work is taking place;
25 however, this work is rarely written up for publication. This experience, although
26 mixed, suggests that despite some initial scepticism, many researchers have found
27 PPI beneficial to their work. As one UK based interviewee put it, "*Now that we do it I*
28 *wouldn't be without it*".
29
30

31 The greater uptake of PPI in the UK may simply reflect the fact that many research
32 funders have made evidence of PPI a prerequisite for a successful application,
33 although this begs the question, why have many UK funders taken this stance in the
34 first place? There has been some preliminary work done on different 'cultures of
35 involvement' in different parts of Europe¹³. This may be an issue that is worthy of
36 further exploration and will need to be taken in to account if PPI is to be implemented
37 successfully in different regions of Europe.
38
39

40 Most of the PPI activity described by our interviewees related to the design and
41 running of clinical trials. The contribution that PPI could make to laboratory based
42 research was absent, although PPI in this area could play a significant role in helping
43 researchers to develop transparency, accountability and communication of their work
44 to the wider public. Evidence from other areas of basic research suggests that PPI
45 can help in the development of research questions and outcome measures in
46 laboratory based research¹⁴
47
48

49 One of our interviewees suggested that substantial training would be required before
50 public contributors could be involved throughout the medicines development
51 process. EUPATI provides this kind of training and sees it as essential to enabling
52 patients to act as effective advocates. However, some writers warn that an
53 unintended consequence of this training may be to create groups of patients who
54 identify too closely with the concerns of researchers rather than providing an
55
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57

1
2
3 alternative patient perspective¹⁵. In our work with PPIPAD we have found that some
4 training is necessary to enable constructive discussions to take place, e.g. on the
5 medicines development process, but we did not find that this undermined the ability
6 of panel members to present their own view point.
7

8 Unease was also raised about the representativeness of potential public
9 contributors. This is an issue which has been widely debated in the PPI literature¹⁶.
10 It is important to keep in mind that what is required in PPI is not statistical
11 representativeness but what may be termed 'experiential representativeness', i.e.
12 representation of people with the experiential knowledge that is most relevant to the
13 work in hand. However, concerns that public contributors are drawn from a relatively
14 narrow section of society seem well founded and are reflected in the wider PPI
15 literature.
16
17

18 Some interviewees also seemed to view the potential benefits of PPI in relatively
19 narrow terms, i.e. solely related to experience of an infection which is transitory.
20 Unlike public contributors with chronic conditions, they did not see public contributors
21 in antimicrobial research as developing 'expertise' in their own illness. However,
22 others saw the potential for public contributors to play a wider range of roles,
23 including acting as 'research ambassadors' and helping to create a more research
24 receptive public.
25
26

27 Given the potential time and energy required to locate and involve appropriate public
28 contributors in this area of work, the lack of clarity of the potential benefits of PPI,
29 and doubt about the ability of the public to engage with the issues, it is perhaps not
30 surprising that many researchers in this area appear not to prioritise PPI in their
31 work.
32

33 However, although individuals expressed scepticism about the contribution that PPI
34 could make to different stages of the medicines development lifecycle, collectively
35 our interviewees identified a range of potential benefits of PPI covering most stages
36 of the medicines development process. Due to the lack of published work in this
37 area, there has been little opportunity for the researchers leading PPI to share and
38 learn from each other's experiences.
39
40

41 **Strengths and Limitations**

42 Our interview sample is small and recruited via personal contacts. It is in no way
43 representative of researchers in the antimicrobial research community. However, our
44 aim was not to map PPI activity in antimicrobial research, but to ascertain what
45 approaches to PPI in antimicrobial medicines development are currently being
46 utilised, the impacts that these approaches are having, and barriers to implementing
47 these approaches - this, we were able to do. While it is possible that our sample is
48 biased and represents a partial view of the issues discussed, it is unlikely that the
49 issues are unique to our interviewees. In fact, many of the issues raised are
50 recognisable in the wider PPI literature^{7,8}.
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53

54 We chose to undertake the interviews via telephone. It is possible that the lack of
55 body language cues and personal interaction may have had an effect on the quality
56
57

of the data collected. The data we collected was not of a personal or sensitive nature so this may have had less of an impact than in some other areas of research¹⁷.

Concluding comments

A major issue in developing PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research will be in overcoming the view that, at best, PPI has only a marginal contribution to make in this area of research. The findings from this study, although mixed, suggest that well designed PPI has an untapped potential to enhance antimicrobial research. The difficulty is in breaking the cycle of low expectations, leading to low investment, leading to low impact and so on¹⁸. In the UK, this cycle has begun to break down. This has been brought about by, among other things, research funders making PPI a mandatory part of grant applications. It may be that similar measures will need to be adopted in Europe and elsewhere to break this cycle, although the possibility that different attitudes to involvement may exist in different parts of Europe may also need to be explored and taken in to account. However, it is clear that significant knowledge about the benefits of PPI in antimicrobial research is already beginning to be accumulated. Unfortunately this practice based knowledge is invisible to the wider academic community because it has not been published.

An important prerequisite for the future development of PPI in antimicrobial research will be the provision of clear and easily accessible guidance to researchers in this field on how to conduct PPI and the evidence of its benefits. Organisations like EUPATI have already made great strides in this direction. In order to tackle the issues raised in this article the authors have also developed a toolkit for PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research¹⁹.

Importantly, none of our interviewees expressed hostility to the concept of PPI but several remained to be convinced of its value. Reassuringly, it appears that the researchers with direct experience of PPI were also the most positive about its benefits. With this in mind, we leave the final word to one of our interviewees,

“Go in to it (PPI) with an open mind and be prepared to be surprised about how valuable it will be.”

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the members of PPIPAD for their help and support. We also acknowledge Julie Gibbs (Research Administrator for Microbiology, NBT) for her invaluable practical input into supporting the PPIPAD. The research leading to these results was conducted as part of the COMBACTE-MAGNET consortium. For further information please refer to www.COMBACTE.com

Author Statement: AG, DE, SG and AM were involved in the developing the concept and design of the study. AG and MK collected the data. AG analysed the data. All authors were involved in drafting and revising the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding: This research project receives support from the Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking under grant agreement n° 115523 | 115620 | 115737 resources of which are composed of financial contribution from the European Union

Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) and EFPIA companies in kind contribution

Data statement: The data can be accessed by contacting the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interests: None declared

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BMJ Open

Challenges and opportunities for involving patients and the public in acute antimicrobial medicine development research: an interview study

Journal:	<i>BMJ Open</i>
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2018-024918.R2
Article Type:	Communication article
Date Submitted by the Author:	16-Oct-2018
Complete List of Authors:	Gibson, Andy; University of the West of England, Health and Social Sciences Kok, Michele; University of the West of England, Health and Social Sciences Evans, David; University of West England, Grier, Sally; Southmead Hospital MacGowan, Alasdair; Southmead Hospital
Primary Subject Heading:	Patient-centred medicine
Secondary Subject Heading:	Infectious diseases
Keywords:	antimicrobial research, patient and public involvement, challenges and opportunities, acute infections

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Challenges and opportunities for involving patients and the public in acute antimicrobial medicine development research: an interview study

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Abstract

Objectives: To explore what approaches to patient and public involvement (PPI) in antimicrobial medicines development are currently being utilised, what are the impacts of PPI on antimicrobial medicines development and what are the barriers to its implementation?

Design: Interview study

Setting: Antimicrobial medicines development research

Participants: Principal investigators known to have led studies involving PPI or expressed an interest in PPI.

Results: There is very little published work PPI in antimicrobial research. Individual interviewees expressed scepticism about the contribution that PPI could make to different stages of the medicines development life cycle but collectively identified a range of potential benefits of PPI covering most stages of the medicines development process.

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3 *Conclusions:* A major issue in developing PPI in antimicrobial medicines development
4 research will be in overcoming the view that, at best, PPI has only a marginal
5 contribution to make in this area of research. The findings from this study, although
6 mixed, suggest that well designed PPI has an untapped potential to enhance
7 antimicrobial research.
8
9

10 **Key Words**

11
12 Antimicrobial research, patient and public involvement, challenges and opportunities,
13 acute infections.
14

15 **Article Summary**

- 16 • The paper presents new information on what approaches to PPI in anti-microbial
17 medicines development are currently being utilised, the impacts that these
18 approaches are having, and barriers to implementing these approaches.
- 19 • Our interview sample is small and may not be representative of researchers in
20 the antimicrobial research community as a whole.
- 21 • It is possible that our sample is biased and represents a partial view of the issues
22 discussed but it is unlikely that the issues raised are unique to our interviewees.
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26 **Background: Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in health research**

27
28 There is a rapidly growing interest in patient and public involvement (PPI) in health
29 research. INVOLVE, a UK based advisory group on PPI funded by the National Institute
30 for Health Research (NIHR), defines involvement as research being carried out 'with' or
31 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them¹. This is distinct from
32 either disseminating information about research to the public or people participating as
33 subjects of the research. Examples include acting as joint grant holders or co-applicants
34 on a research project, involvement in identifying research priorities, participating as
35 members of a project advisory or steering group, commenting on and developing patient
36 information leaflets or other research materials, and users and/or carers themselves
37 carrying out research.
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41 Within the literature there are ongoing discussions about what 'good' PPI looks like. In
42 recent years the term 'coproduction' has gained prominence. These discussions reflect
43 longer term concerns regarding the impact of entrenched power asymmetries between
44 researchers and the public on the conduct and practice of involvement^{2,3,4}.
45
46

47 PPI is advocated on several grounds - it helps ensure that health research is conducted
48 ethically, it improves the quality of research design and it helps in the production of
49 research findings which address patient and public concerns. Underlying these claims is
50 the assertion that PPI provides access to an additional source of knowledge, i.e.
51 experiential knowledge, which is different to, but equally as important as, scientific or
52 professional knowledge, in carrying out health research².
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PPI is an international movement, with comparable initiatives in other countries. In the US, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute ([PCORI](#)) is a major source of research funding, focused on question generation, patient-centred clinical effectiveness research, and broad dissemination. The Strategy for Patient Orientated Research ([SPOR](#)) in Canada, and the Consumer and Community Health Research Forum ([Involving People in Research](#)) in Australia include consumer-based research and a strong consumer knowledge base. There are also more targeted interventions such as the European Patients' Academy on Therapeutic Innovation ([EUPATI](#)) which aims to increase the number of patients who are knowledgeable of the medicines development process and therefore able to act as effective advocates and advisors in medicines research.

Evidence of PPI in bid development and research plans is now a requirement for many UK-based medical research funding bodies. In Europe the Innovative Medicines Initiative ([IMI](#)) places a strong emphasis on the importance of PPI in health research.

There has been much debate about the correct terminology to use when referring to members of the public who are involved in designing and carrying out research. In this paper, we use the term 'public contributors' to cover people who may have had direct experience of an infection, their carers, and members of the public who may have a more general interest in antimicrobial research.

PPI in Acute Antimicrobial Medicines Research

Despite the trend towards increasing PPI in research there has apparently been relatively little interest in public involvement in antimicrobial research. Several authors of this paper (DE, AG, SG, AM) were involved in carrying out a systematic review to identify the extent, quality and impact of PPI in antimicrobial drug development research⁵. No relevant studies were found, apart from one protocol paper with a brief mention of PPI. Given the rapidly growing international problem of antimicrobial resistance, this is an important area of research and public concern in terms of both the need to develop new antimicrobials and the stewardship of existing antimicrobials⁶.

There may be a number of reasons why public involvement is not prominent in antimicrobial research. One is that researchers involved in antimicrobial research may be unaware of the potential benefits of PPI. There is a growing evidence base for the positive impacts of PPI on research. This includes impacts on setting the research agenda, intervention development, choosing outcome measures, data collection, analysis of data and writing up and dissemination^{7, 8}. However, there is little consensus on the aims, methodology and appropriate outcome measures for evaluating PPI. This partly reflects the different requirements of funders, researchers and public contributors in developing evidence of the benefits of PPI, which in turn makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.

Another barrier might be the biomedical nature of much of the research. It may be felt that there is less scope for PPI to beneficially impact on laboratory based research, as

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3 opposed to more applied health services research. That being said there are well
4 documented cases of public involvement in other types of medicines development
5 research, perhaps the most notable being Epstein's work on the development of the
6 relationship and interaction between AIDS activists and AIDS research⁹.

7
8
9 The example of AIDS activism is helpful but the focus in this paper is on acute, rather
10 than chronic infections, which leads us to one final, and perhaps, crucial issue, the
11 temporary nature of most microbial infections. With many long term conditions, there
12 are well established patient groups that have advocated for the rights of their members
13 to be heard in decisions about service provision and research that affects them. The
14 AIDS activism mentioned above is one example, but groups representing people with
15 mental health problems, physical disabilities and chronic conditions such as diabetes
16 also spring to mind. The existence of these groups and networks make it easier for
17 researchers to contact appropriate patients and carers and involve them in their work. In
18 contrast there are few, if any groups, representing people who have experienced acute
19 microbial infections. There are groups for conditions which may make people prone to
20 recurrent infections, e.g. bronchiectasis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and
21 cystic fibrosis. These are important groups to be aware of but it should be borne in mind
22 that people who suffer recurrent chronic infections due to pre-existing diseases may
23 have a different experience and knowledge of their disease compared to those who
24 experience a single and unexpected severe acute infection.

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29 The long term nature of some conditions also makes it possible for researchers to build
30 more sustained relationships with these patients across the life time of a project, leading
31 to more substantial involvement. Patients often experience acute bacterial infection as a
32 one-off experience which is either successfully treated with antibiotics or may be fatal.
33 Thus, involving patients in research on treating certain types of infections may be more
34 problematic. What was unknown at the beginning of this study was the extent to which
35 researchers were able to overcome these barriers and successfully involve patients in
36 antimicrobial medicines development research.

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40 The authors of this paper are part of a larger European programme of research to
41 develop new antimicrobial agents (COMBACTE-MAGNET). Combatting bacterial
42 resistance in Europe –molecules against Gram negative infections
43 (www.combacte.com): A consortium seeking new ways of treating multi-resistant
44 bacterial infections. The authors have the responsibility to encourage the development
45 of PPI within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme and are based in Work Package
46 6I. It is therefore important to identify any relevant work on PPI in antimicrobial research
47 that could be built on for the programme.

48
49
50 Our aims were therefore to identify any relevant PPI work taking place in antimicrobial
51 research within the UK or elsewhere within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme and
52 to collect data on the approaches to PPI used and the impact of PPI.

53 54 55 **Research Questions:**

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- 2
- 3 1. What approaches to PPI in antimicrobial medicines development are currently
- 4 being utilised?
- 5
- 6 2. What are the impacts of PPI on antimicrobial medicines development and what
- 7 are the barriers to its implementation?
- 8

9 **Research Design**

10 The majority of the data were collected by means of telephone interviews. Telephone
11 interviews were chosen because the potential participants were geographically
12 dispersed, based in the UK, the US, Vietnam and mainland Europe. The numbers of
13 people we were able to identify carrying out PPI in antimicrobial research were also
14 relatively small. It was therefore possible to interview all our potential participants.
15 Telephone interviews also offered a practical way to develop a more detailed
16 understanding of the process and outcomes of PPI in antimicrobial research than would
17 be possible using other methods such as a questionnaire.
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21 *Population and sample*

22
23 The population was researchers involved in antimicrobial research within the UK and
24 the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme. Potential interviewees were identified through
25 our contacts within the COMBACTE-MAGNET programme. We also contacted
26 INVOLVE to identify potential contacts but without any success. We had hoped that a
27 rapid review of the literature in this area of work would yield some contacts⁵.
28
29

30 We had originally planned to carry out a purposive sample of identified contacts, but
31 because we were only able to identify a small number of people to participate, all
32 identified contacts were interviewed. The people identified were all known to our team.
33 AM is an expert in this area of research and was particularly helpful in identifying
34 contacts and providing introductions. This was significant given the lack of published
35 literature to follow up or contacts from other sources. We interviewed nine people in
36 total - all were male principal investigators with established research track records, five
37 were based in the UK, one was based in Vietnam but the interview related to work
38 carried out in the UK, one based in the US, one in Switzerland and one in the
39 Netherlands. All of the researchers who had carried out work in the UK had experience
40 of PPI in their research projects. It transpired that the three non-UK interviewees did not
41 have experience of carrying out PPI but did have opinions on the potential benefits of
42 PPI. We have included their comments in this study because they illustrate some of the
43 barriers to developing PPI in antimicrobial research.
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48 *Data collection*

49
50 Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach¹⁰. This approach allowed
51 us to ensure that important topics were covered while allowing the flexibility for the
52 interviewees to raise any issues they may have wished to. The interviews were
53 conducted by AG and MK and on average lasted twenty minutes. The topic guide was
54 structured to obtain the following information:
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57

- Skills or previous background in PPI
- Perceived value of PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research
- Where in the medicines development process PPI is carried out
- Recruitment and maintenance of PPI groups
- Methods of involvement

The topic guide was developed by the authors and was informed by our wider discussion with members of the Patient and Public Involvement Panel for Antimicrobial Drugs (PPIPAD) at regular bi-monthly meetings.

In addition to the areas listed above issues specific to a particular research project were pursued during the interviews, where they were relevant to the aims of this paper.

Patient Involvement

This paper is part of a larger project on public involvement in antimicrobial medicines development which includes the development of a toolkit for PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research. The work of the project is guided by members of PPIPAD. Members of the panel confirmed that our research questions were important issues to investigate. Discussions with PPIPAD and the project team informed the development the interview schedule. PPIPAD members were not involved in recruitment to this study. We will discuss with PPIPAD the potential for further dissemination of the findings from this work.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval to carry out this study was obtained from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of the West of England. Informed consent was obtained before interviews commenced.

Data analysis

The data was analysed by AG. The approach to data analysis was guided by the work of Ritchie and Spencer¹¹. This approach was taken because it was designed with research related to policy issues in mind and because it allows for themes to be developed both inductively and deductively from the data, i.e. it was possible to explore topics that arose from our original research questions while remaining open to identifying issues and concerns related to PPI as identified by our interviewees.

The results are presented following the themes developed by the analysis process, as follows:

- Responsibility for carrying out PPI
- Basis for public involvement
- Time and resource implications
- Recruitment of public contributors
- PPI activities undertaken

- Value added
- Main barriers to public involvement

Results

Responsibility for carrying out PPI

As stated above, three of our interviewees were interested in the potential contribution of PPI but had no experience of doing PPI. The other five interviewees were responsible for ensuring that PPI work was carried out in their projects in line with any commitments made in their original funding applications. However, in practice, responsibility for PPI was usually delegated to a specific member of the team who was accountable for the day-to-day running of PPI activities.

Basis for public involvement

It is common in the literature on involvement to argue that public contributors possess important 'lived experience' of a particular condition which needs to be considered, alongside other forms of knowledge, e.g. professional and scientific, when designing research¹². However, in antimicrobial research we are dealing with acute infections which people may not have experienced before. This, combined with the laboratory based nature of antimicrobial research, led to a questioning of the value of PPI by some of our interviewees. As one of our study participants put it, *"I don't think patients have any major role to play, honestly."* (interview one)

However, other interviewees did not feel that this lack of 'lived experience' of a condition disqualified public contributors from being able to add value to antimicrobial research. The ability to provide an *"alternative perspective"* was seen as important. One of our interviewees, for example, talked about his experience of involving young people in the running of trials related to vaccination programmes. Not only did they gain valuable information about the best time and place to contact potential participants, the young people involved also acted as "research ambassadors", explaining the relevance and importance of participating in research to other young people and helping to create a, *"research engaged community"*. (interview three)

Furthermore, this interviewee felt that involvement of this kind,

"Empowers researchers to know that they are taking the views of our research subjects into account in terms of the importance of our research and the way that we do it."

It was notable that the interviewees with some direct experience of PPI were generally more positive about the potential of PPI to aid their research than those with none.

Time and resources

The need to allocate adequate time and resources for PPI was noted by interviewees. At a minimum, a budget is required to pay for the expenses of public contributors. It was also acknowledged that building relationships with a group of public contributors takes

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3 time but, as one interviewee noted, *“Much less time or trouble than working with clinical*
4 *contributors.”* (interview two)
5

6 The need for time and resources was not necessarily seen as a problem, particularly if
7 justified by clear benefits from PPI. However, one interviewee did raise concerns about
8 PPI adding, *“an additional layer of bureaucratic complications.”* (interview one)
9

10 None of the interviewees provided formal training and support on involvement to their
11 public contributors, although most provided informal support, for example by explaining
12 a particular research project and the planned role of public contributors.
13

14 Nevertheless, one interviewee was sceptical of the value that public contributors could
15 add without significant training and support because of the complexity of the issues
16 raised by antimicrobial resistance and the development of new medicines to combat
17 this. He felt that what was needed was,
18

19 *“... a well-educated elite representing patient groups who understand what we are*
20 *talking about”* (interview eight)
21
22

23 His concern was that this would be difficult to achieve given the short term nature of
24 acute infections.
25

26 *Recruitment of public contributors*

27

28 Recruitment was seen as a major problem by several interviewees because of the acute
29 nature of most infections and the lack of easily identifiable patient groups to work with. It
30 should be noted that this is not a problem unique to research in to acute infections.
31 Other forms of interaction with healthcare, e.g. emergency care, are similarly episodic.
32

33 In most examples where PPI had taken place, contributors were recruited via pre-
34 existing involvement networks and contacts. As one interviewee put it, we, *“beg, borrow*
35 *or steal”* (interview four). Only one of the interviewees had set up a public advisory
36 group specifically for antimicrobial research projects - this was a relatively recent
37 innovation and was seen as a way of dealing with recruitment difficulties (interview
38 four).
39

40 Furthermore, several interviewees said that they regularly worked with an informal
41 group of public contributors across different projects. One interviewee said that they
42 drew on a group of approximately ten people to work with on various projects since
43 2010 (interview two).
44

45 It can clearly be beneficial and time efficient to work with public contributors with whom
46 the researchers had already established a working relationship. This may also be a way
47 of coping with the difficulty of engaging with this group of patients as noted earlier in this
48 paper. One interviewee also commented about the potential difficulties caused by
49 people dropping out of activities due to illness (interview two). Having a core group to
50 work with may help to minimise the impact of this kind of problem.
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3 However there were some concerns raised about how 'representative' public
4 contributors were. One interviewee talked about most public contributors being, "*White,*
5 *middle class types*" (interview one) and another commented on the problem of bias, i.e.
6 that public contributors may have personal interests which they may wish to pursue
7 through their involvement in research (interview two).
8
9

10 One interviewee (interviewee seven) described the very valuable contribution made by
11 one public contributor but was concerned that this person had a very specific interest
12 and motivation to become involved in the research which was not representative of the
13 general population. This was particularly pronounced since other public contributors
14 dropped out during the lifetime of the project leaving this person as the sole public
15 contributor.
16
17

18 *PPI Activities*

19
20 Despite the scepticism expressed by some as to the value of public involvement in
21 antimicrobial research, interviewees described a wide range of activities that public
22 contributors had undertaken in their research. These included, advising on
23 confidentiality issues related to bioinformatics, guideline development for the use of
24 antimicrobials, research agenda setting, preparing ethics applications, reviewing
25 interview schedules, writing lay summaries, selecting outcome measures and
26 involvement in planning and running trials. Many of these examples resonate with
27 reports on the role that PPI plays in other forms of research^{7, 8}.
28
29

30
31 However, there were some potential areas of PPI work in antimicrobial research that are
32 not reflected in this broader literature. One interviewee talked about the importance of
33 PPI in making judgements about the "*trade-off between toxicity and efficacy*" (interview
34 eight) and another talked about the importance of working with patients and carers to
35 design dosage regimes.
36

37
38 Another potential area for PPI to make a contribution, identified by two interviewees, is
39 that of antimicrobial stewardship. Although this occurs after the drug development
40 process and is therefore outside the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that altering
41 prescribing practice involves changing the behaviour of both clinicians and patients.
42 Designing effective interventions to achieve this is likely to require the involvement of
43 both parties.
44

45
46 Many of these activities described above were carried out face-to-face, in workshops or
47 project meetings. Some activities, for example amending information sheets, were often
48 carried out via e-mail.
49

50 *Value added*

51
52 There was a wide range of views among our interviewees on the value of PPI in
53 antimicrobial research. In some cases, the contribution was seen as "*minimal*" and at
54 best contributing a "*subjective insight*". One interviewee saw public involvement as, "*a*
55 *lot of the time pointless*", and as only relevant for a "*fraction of the time*" (interview one).
56
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3 However, another interviewee commented that, “PPI is required at all stages (of a
4 research project)” but that “PPI has most impact at the planning stage” as it “...can be a
5 really good informal check that there is clarity of purpose” (interview four).
6

7 PPI was also seen as helpful in dealing with operational concerns as they “crop up”
8 (interview two). One interviewee commented on how helpful public contributors can be
9 in advising on recruitment strategies for research projects and ensuring the acceptability
10 of research procedures and proposed interventions to research participants. For
11 example, one research project involved the use of anal swabs. The public contributors
12 were able to advise the researchers on how best to approach potential participants and
13 discuss this issue with them in a way that minimised anxiety about the process,
14 resulting in a significant boost to recruitment figures (interview six).
15
16

17
18 There was evidence of acceptance, even among those more sceptical about the
19 benefits of PPI in setting the direction of research.
20

21 “We should not do research because we as researchers think it is interesting to us and
22 which patients think is never going to benefit them.” (interview eight)
23

24 *Main barriers to public involvement*

25

26 Some of the barriers to developing PPI in antimicrobial research, such as the lack of
27 clearly identifiable patient groups to work with and the technical nature of some of the
28 research, have already been commented on. Beyond this, it is clear from the interview
29 data that we have collected that PPI is a new concept in the world of antimicrobial
30 research. Several of our interviewees had only recently become aware of it as a
31 concept and were unclear about what it meant or how to put it into practice. There was
32 also scepticism about PPI’s specific contribution to antimicrobial research.
33
34

35 For one interviewee, the main barrier to effective PPI is, “Lack of knowledge and
36 experience of the area”. He commented that from his experience the impact of PPI had
37 been variable and this was related to the variable quality of PPI practice and facilitation.
38 He saw this as a result of the PPI field being, “relatively immature”. As he put it, “we are
39 all learning how to do it” (interview 4). These comments could apply to the general
40 development of PPI in research but are particularly relevant to the area of antimicrobial
41 research. It may be inferred from these comments that as skill and expertise are
42 developed in carrying out PPI in antimicrobial research, the beneficial impacts will
43 increase. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the PPI community.
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48 **Discussion**

49 Although very little has been published about PPI in antimicrobial research our small
50 study suggests that, at least in the UK context, significant PPI work is taking place;
51 however, this work is rarely written up for publication. This experience, although mixed,
52 suggests that despite some initial scepticism, many researchers have found PPI
53 beneficial to their work. As one UK based interviewee put it, “Now that we do it I
54 wouldn’t be without it”.
55
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1
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3 The greater uptake of PPI in the UK may simply reflect the fact that many research
4 funders have made evidence of PPI a prerequisite for a successful application, although
5 this begs the question, why have many UK funders taken this stance in the first place?
6 There has been some preliminary work done on different 'cultures of involvement' in
7 different parts of Europe¹³. This may be an issue that is worthy of further exploration
8 and will need to be taken in to account if PPI is to be implemented successfully in
9 different regions of Europe.
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12 Most of the PPI activity described by our interviewees related to the design and running
13 of clinical trials. The contribution that PPI could make to laboratory based research was
14 absent, although PPI in this area could play a significant role in helping researchers to
15 develop transparency, accountability and communication of their work to the wider
16 public. Evidence from other areas of basic research suggests that PPI can help in the
17 development of research questions and outcome measures in laboratory based
18 research¹⁴
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22 One of our interviewees suggested that substantial training would be required before
23 public contributors could be involved throughout the medicines development process.
24 EUPATI provides this kind of training and sees it as essential to enabling patients to act
25 as effective advocates. However, some writers warn that an unintended consequence of
26 this training may be to create groups of patients who identify too closely with the
27 concerns of researchers rather than providing an alternative patient perspective¹⁵. In
28 our work with PPIPAD we have found that some training is necessary to enable
29 constructive discussions to take place, e.g. on the medicines development process, but
30 we did not find that this undermined the ability of panel members to present their own
31 view point.
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35 Unease was also raised about the representativeness of potential public contributors.
36 This is an issue which has been widely debated in the PPI literature¹⁶. It is important to
37 keep in mind that what is required in PPI is not statistical representativeness but what
38 may be termed 'experiential representativeness', i.e. representation of people with the
39 experiential knowledge that is most relevant to the work in hand. However, concerns
40 that public contributors are drawn from a relatively narrow section of society seem well
41 founded and are reflected in the wider PPI literature.
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45 Some interviewees also seemed to view the potential benefits of PPI in relatively narrow
46 terms, i.e. solely related to experience of an infection which is transitory. Unlike public
47 contributors with chronic conditions, they did not see public contributors in antimicrobial
48 research as developing 'expertise' in their own illness. However, others saw the
49 potential for public contributors to play a wider range of roles, including acting as
50 'research ambassadors' and helping to create a more research receptive public.
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53 Given the potential time and energy required to locate and involve appropriate public
54 contributors in this area of work, the lack of clarity of the potential benefits of PPI, and
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doubt about the ability of the public to engage with the issues, it is perhaps not surprising that many researchers in this area appear not to prioritise PPI in their work.

However, although individuals expressed scepticism about the contribution that PPI could make to different stages of the medicines development lifecycle, collectively our interviewees identified a range of potential benefits of PPI covering most stages of the medicines development process. Due to the lack of published work in this area, there has been little opportunity for the researchers leading PPI to share and learn from each other's experiences.

Strengths and Limitations

Our interview sample is small and recruited via personal contacts. It is in no way representative of researchers in the antimicrobial research community. However, our aim was not to map PPI activity in antimicrobial research, but to ascertain what approaches to PPI in antimicrobial medicines development are currently being utilised, the impacts that these approaches are having, and barriers to implementing these approaches - this, we were able to do. While it is possible that our sample is biased and represents a partial view of the issues discussed, it is unlikely that the issues are unique to our interviewees. In fact, many of the issues raised are recognisable in the wider PPI literature^{7, 8}.

We chose to undertake the interviews via telephone. It is possible that the lack of body language cues and personal interaction may have had an effect on the quality of the data collected. The data we collected was not of a personal or sensitive nature so this may have had less of an impact than in some other areas of research¹⁷.

Concluding comments

A major issue in developing PPI in antimicrobial medicines development research will be in overcoming the view that, at best, PPI has only a marginal contribution to make in this area of research. The findings from this study, although mixed, suggest that well designed PPI has an untapped potential to enhance antimicrobial research. The difficulty is in breaking the cycle of low expectations, leading to low investment, leading to low impact and so on¹⁸. In the UK, this cycle has begun to break down. This has been brought about by, among other things, research funders making PPI a mandatory part of grant applications. It may be that similar measures will need to be adopted in Europe and elsewhere to break this cycle, although the possibility that different attitudes to involvement may exist in different parts of Europe may also need to be explored and taken in to account. However, it is clear that significant knowledge about the benefits of PPI in antimicrobial research is already beginning to be accumulated. Unfortunately this practice based knowledge is invisible to the wider academic community because it has not been published.

An important prerequisite for the future development of PPI in antimicrobial research will be the provision of clear and easily accessible guidance to researchers in this field on

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3 how to conduct PPI and the evidence of its benefits. Organisations like EUPATI have
4 already made great strides in this direction. In order to tackle the issues raised in this
5 article the authors have also developed a toolkit for PPI in antimicrobial medicines
6 development research¹⁹.
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9 Importantly, none of our interviewees expressed hostility to the concept of PPI but
10 several remained to be convinced of its value. Reassuringly, it appears that the
11 researchers with direct experience of PPI were also the most positive about its benefits.
12 With this in mind, we leave the final word to one of our interviewees,
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14 *“Go in to it (PPI) with an open mind and be prepared to be surprised about how*
15 *valuable it will be.’*
16

17 **Acknowledgements**

18
19 We would like to thank the members of PPIPAD for their help and support. We also
20 acknowledge Julie Gibbs (Research Administrator for Microbiology, NBT) for her
21 invaluable practical input into supporting the PPIPAD. The research leading to these
22 results was conducted as part of the COMBACTE-MAGNET consortium. For further
23 information please refer to www.COMBACTE.com
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26 **Author Statement:** AG, DE, SG and AM were involved in the developing the concept
27 and design of the study. AG and MK collected the data. AG analysed the data. All
28 authors were involved in drafting and revising the manuscript. All authors read and
29 approved the final manuscript.
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32 **Funding:** This research project receives support from the Innovative Medicines Initiative
33 Joint Undertaking under grant agreement n° 115523 | 115620 | 115737 resources of
34 which are composed of financial contribution from the European Union Seventh
35 Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) and EFPIA companies in kind contribution
36
37

38 **Data statement:** The data can be accessed by contacting the corresponding author.
39

40 **Conflicts of Interests:** None declared
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