

Determining the Impact of UK NIHR Trauma Trials Over 17 Years: A Retrospective Review

Lynn Hutchings, MB, BChir, MSc; Caroline Hing, MD; Xavier L. Griffin, PhD, BMBCh; Matt Costa, PhD

Purpose: The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) together with the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSE) research initiatives have facilitated trial delivery in orthopaedic trauma, providing funding and infrastructure to support trial development and delivery. Emphasis on conducting high-quality research to advance patient care is now well established in the United Kingdom (UK). A collaborative authorship model enabling engagement from surgeons and trainees across the UK has embedded trial recruitment within standard care.

Methods: To determine the number of NIHR trauma trials delivered, their epidemiology, and the impact from a retrospective review of 17 years of trauma trials in the UK, Clinical Trials Units delivering NIHR trauma trials were contacted to participate and results were collated across the trials.

Results: From 2008 to 2025, there were 25 national trauma trials registered for recruitment; 18 trials were completed and their results were published. Of the 18 studies published, 1330 participating collaborating authors were cited on the final publication. Completed trials included a study population ranging from the mean age of 3 to 86 years, and 24,079 patients were screened with 13,372 recruited to participate. Out of the 18 studies, all but one study, which closed early, successfully recruited to target. Studies included both upper limb (7) and lower limb (11). An additional seven trauma studies are in recruitment and follow up.

Conclusion: A culture shift in the UK has supported the successful participation of National Health Service (NHS) UK trauma surgeons in the delivery of trials with a collaborative authorship model and patient participation, including both trainees and established surgeons in the successful delivery of national trials. Support from Clinical Trials Units with regional principal investigators and associate principal investigators comprising trainees provides a network for rapid set up and delivery of interventional trauma trials.