

## Addressing local priorities within our research: “FAIRER-DTP” ACHA’s first PhD programme

The Academic Centre for Healthy Ageing (ACHA) is a new research, education and training centre from Barts Health NHS Trust and Queen Mary University of London.

We work closely with local people and health and care staff in north east London to improve care and support for people as they grow older.

ACHA was recently awarded match-funding from the Dunhill Medical Trust to establish its first PhD Programme: “New approaches to FrAilty: Inclusivity and REsilience in Ageing Research” (FAIRER-DTP), due to begin in January 2025.

FAIRER will focus, like ACHA, on applied health research, responding to the needs of our local population and health and care system and seeking implementable solutions.

ACHA academics will oversee the programme via a steering group and the proposed doctorates will be based on the three overarching areas of ACHA:


1. addressing the challenges of multi-morbidity, long-term conditions and a focus on the prevention of frailty
2. rehabilitation and the recovery of older people following life-changing trauma and illness
3. cognition and older people’s mental health.


This document details how the PhD research topics were identified through extensive engagement to ensure they respond to community feedback on local healthy ageing priorities.

**Applications are now open for students to apply for the PhD programme.**

To find out more visit: [acha.qmul.ac.uk/fairer-dtp/](http://acha.qmul.ac.uk/fairer-dtp/)



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Remarkable  
research for  
healthy ageing  
THE DUNHILL MEDICAL TRUST



# FAIRER Engagement:

By listening to our local partners, the public and patients about their ideas, concerns, and aspirations for healthy ageing, we identified key priorities to inform the PhD research topics.

## 1. We held an engagement workshop with our local partners and engagement leads who:

- Recommended methodologies for engagement;
- highlighted opportunities to attend community events and;
- confirmed their own priorities for healthy ageing

## 2. We then discussed the outputs from the engagement workshop with the ACHA Community Advisory Group and:

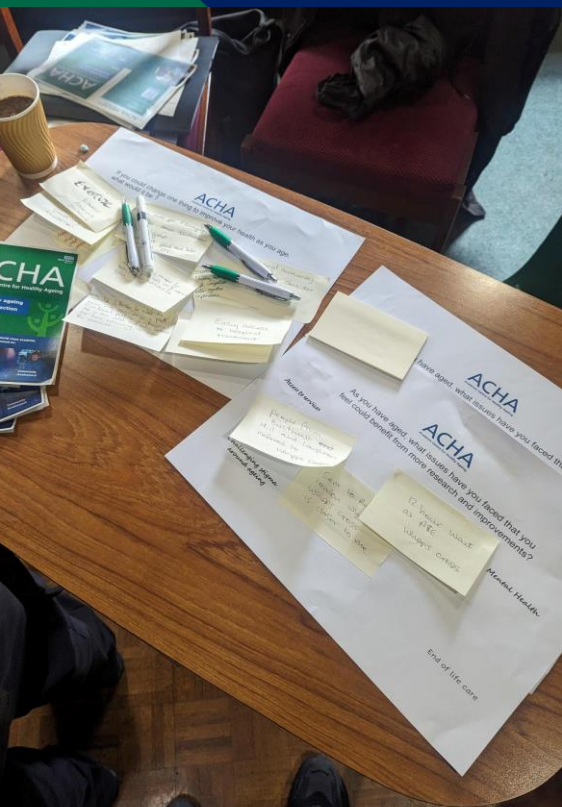
- Reviewed the engagement leads' suggestions;
- Considered and agreed community engagement plan and;
- Co-designed questions to capture feed back

## 3. We then began our engagement with patients and the local community:

- We held stalls at local health and wellbeing events;
- attended community spaces to meet local people and gather their views and;
- Used a survey to ask the following questions:

***"As you have aged, what issues have you faced that you feel could benefit from research and improvements?"***

***"If you could change one thing to improve your health as you age, what would it be?"***



# The Responses:

(listed according to topic prevalence)

## Frailty Prevention

education around healthy eating  
use of technology to health at home  
**pain management** fibromyalgia  
holistic alternatives for pain management  
falls prevention/improving balance  
early identification of problems  
reduce over-pathologizing  
improving mobility **mobility** **cancer**  
smoking/copd improving diet  
role of faith in wellbeing  
**improving joint mobility**  
cardiovascular conditions  
increasing exercise/benefits of exercise  
affordable access to facilities to exercise  
access to affordable good quality food  
management of long term conditions  
research into systemic illness and prevention  
**exercise** **nutrition**  
low sodium  
support and encouragement to exercise  
improving/maintaining bone strength  
knowledge/education knowledge about painkillers

## Rehabilitation

recovery from cancer  
side effects of chemotherapy  
recovery following hip and knee surgery  
**improving balance**  
recovery following acute event  
recovery from falls/fractures  
recovery from operations  
recovery from trauma  
recovery from childhood trauma  
support following bereavement  
recovery from heart attack  
heart bypass

## Cognition & mental health

### Mental health needs

Dementia research within ethnic minorities

Research into Parkinson's

**Research into dementia**

Loneliness

Better understanding of Neurodiversity and ageing

Research into strokes



# The Detail:

## Frailty Prevention, long term conditions and multimorbidity

### Management of Long-Term Health Conditions (45)

- Early identification of problems- regular screening and quicker diagnosis and treatment (6)
- Managing medications/ multi-morbidity (2)
- Knowledge/ education (9)
- Cancer (8)
- Research into systemic illness and prevention:
  - Diabetes (7)
  - Cardiovascular conditions- heart conditions (5), high blood pressure (2)
- Low sodium (2)
- Fibromyalgia (2)
- Smoking/ COPD (2)

### Mobility (30)

- Research into falls prevention/ improving balance (7)
- Improving/ maintaining bone strength (e.g. osteoporosis) (6)
- Research into improving joint mobility, arthritis, hip/ knee replacements (12)
- Improving mobility (6)

### Exercise (25)

- Increasing exercise/ research into benefits of exercise (16)
- Affordable access- to facilities/spaces to exercise (7)
- Support and encouragement to exercise (2)

### Nutrition (21)

- Improving diet (8)
- Access to affordable, good quality food (9)
- Education around healthy eating particularly within minority ethnic groups (4)

### Pain management (6)

- Improve pain management (3)
- Fibromyalgia/ pain management- more information/ access to support groups (2)
- Holistic alternatives for pain management (1)
- Knowledge about painkillers (1)

### Holistic approach to health (3)

- Reduce over-pathologizing (1)
- Role of faith in supporting wellbeing (2)

### Other (1)

- Use of technology to monitor safety and monitor health within home

### Addressing specific population health needs (1)

- Managing impact of menopause

## Rehabilitation

### Access to healthcare appointments/ professionals (40)

- Waiting times (12)
- More accessible appointments (13), home visits (3), local delivery of treatments (1) and access to medical advice (1)
- Navigating healthcare services (6)
- Timely screening/ diagnosis (6)
- Digital exclusion from accessing appointments (3)

### Cultural considerations (5)

- Food options for diverse cultures/religions in hospital (1)
- Language barriers/ assumptions of English (2)
- Illness management/ dementia research in minority ethnic communities (2)

### Recovery from operations (3)

- Recovery following hip and knee surgery (2)
- Heart bypass (1)

### Recovery from falls/ fractures and improving balance (3)

### Recovery from trauma (3)

- Support following bereavement (2)
- Recovery from childhood trauma (1)

### Recovery following acute event (1)

- Recovery from heart attack

### Recovery from cancer (1)

- Associated side effects of chemotherapy

## Cognition & Mental Health

### Cognitive (17)

- Research into dementia, dementia research within ethnic minority populations (13)
- Research into stroke (5)
- Research into Parkinson's (1)
- Better understanding of Neurodiversity and ageing (1)

### Mental wellbeing and Loneliness (25)

- Loneliness/ need for relationships/ community (11)
- Support for grief (2) trauma (1)
- A sense of purpose/ occupation (6)
- Meaningful leisure activities (3)
- Improving mental health self-care/ mental health first aid (2)

### Addressing specific population health needs (1)

- Managing impact of menopause

### Additional points from engagement leads meeting:

- Improving dementia knowledge in adult social care and workforce.
- Improving knowledge and identification of UTI – (during home visits)
  - Reduce chances of developing dementia
  - Men's health
- Addressing health inequalities and stigma for LGBT communities
- End of life care - Supporting people to make decisions about dying

# FAIRER Research Topic Selection Process

## Frailty Prevention

education around healthy eating  
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## Cognition & Mental Health

**Mental health needs**  
Dementia research within ethnic minorities  
Research into Parkinson's  
**Research into dementia**  
Loneliness Better understanding of Neurodiversity and ageing Research into strokes

### Local community priorities identified

These were then considered in line with local health and care system transformation priorities

The Community engagement results were then shared with academic peers to invite PhD topic proposals

The ACHA Community Advisory Group and an External Academic and Clinical Advisor shortlist 6 topics

6 Topics are advertised across the local health and care system to invite the local workforce to apply for a FAIRER PhD – so that research happens where care happens

# FAIRER Research Projects:

Our Community Advisory Group shortlisted the below Research Project titles for advert:

❖ **Behaviour change to improve cognitive wellbeing in older people from underserved groups with Mild Cognitive Impairment.**

*Primary Supervisor: Dr Megan Armstrong*

❖ **Understanding inequalities in delirium identification to improve care and patient outcomes.**

*Primary Supervisor: Professor Liz Sampson*

❖ **Designing an inequalities focussed digital health intervention for healthy ageing.**

*Primary Supervisor: Dr Jamie Ross*

❖ **Development of a rehabilitation intervention to reduce concerns about falls among carers of older adults with cognitive impairment and fracture.**

*Primary Supervisor: Professor Katie Sheehan*

❖ **The Influence of Multigenerational Housing on Healthcare Use for Persons Living with Dementia.**

*Primary Supervisor: Professor Claudia Cooper*

❖ **Monitoring of fracture repair in older people to optimise recovery.**

*Primary Supervisor: Dr Jerry Tsang*

Further details about the projects are available [here](#).

Please note, students are asked to apply for one of the six projects listed above and only three studentships are available.

Primary and secondary supervisors will be based at Queen Mary University of London, within the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. We are seeking 3rd supervisors from the local health and care system and welcome input into our Steering Group.

**Please get in touch if you are interested in either:**

- Being a 3<sup>rd</sup> Supervisor for any of the projects listed above
- Joining the FAIRER steering group



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