



Research strategy

2020-2023

Executive summary

FMLM's vision is to inspire and promote excellence in medical leadership to drive continuous improvement in health and healthcare in the UK. High quality evidence and research play a key role in the drive to achieve this. In 2015, FMLM partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership and the King's Fund to undertake a review of the research evidence on leadership and leadership development in healthcare (West, Armit, Loewenthal, Eckert, West and Lee, 2015). Subsequently, FMLM included a commitment to supporting, promoting and developing the evidence base for medical leadership in the strategic objectives (2017-2021).

The FMLM research strategy is a commitment to the importance of research and research evidence in pursuit of the FMLM primary objective of improving care for patients through good medical leadership. Research evidence is an essential prerequisite to gaining maximum benefit for patients from medical leadership and to ensure appropriate disbursement of taxpayers' money in relation to leadership development.

This strategy proposes a leadership and advocacy role for FMLM in strengthening the role of research and research evidence in healthcare leadership. It also provides guidance for FMLM activities including organisational and leadership development programmes.

A comprehensive consultation exercise with prominent academics in the health services research community yielded five objectives to guide the FMLM research agenda over the next three years:

- 1. Establish academic partnerships*
- 2. Engage FMLM members and fellows in the research agenda*
- 3. Influence the national research agenda*
- 4. Influence research funders*
- 5. Promote and disseminate research evidence.*

Research is clearly a collaborative process and the responsibility of multiple stakeholders. This strategy argues that FMLM has a central role in building collaborations and networks as well as identifying the research questions relevant to the UK and internationally. Finally, the strategy identifies a range of indicators to monitor progress and provide quality assurance.



Introduction

The Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (FMLM) is the professional home of medical leadership and management in the UK. Its role, encompassed in the five-year strategy (2017-2021), is to help every doctor and dentist to be a better leader for the benefit of patients.

Transformational goals to be achieved by 2021 include:

1. FMLM shall be the first point of contact for medical leadership and management and our *Leadership and Management Standards for Medical Professionals* will be recognised by the healthcare sector as the definition of effective medical leadership
2. FMLM's work will be underpinned by a demonstrably robust evidence base
3. FMLM will build an excellent 'track record' and reputation for supporting individuals and teams
4. FMLM will become a powerful advocate for medical leadership, drawing on the evidence to influence at an international, national, regional and local level
5. FMLM will be financially resilient, sustainable and independent, with a strong and diverse revenue base.

This document builds on Transformational goal 2 in setting out the strategy for strengthening the role of research evidence in all that the organisation does. The document aims to provide FMLM staff, members and stakeholders with a clear understanding of why the Faculty is committed to research.

Strategy context

- FMLM has 2,288 members (31 January 2020)
- There are c.290,000 registered doctors in the UK (Stewart, 2020)
- There were 42, 190 medical students at UK universities in 2018/19 (GMC, 2019)
- Over 400 Board-level medical leaders in the UK
- There are 240 Clinical Fellow Scheme (medical) alumni (2011-2019); in the current cohorts (2019/20) there are 26 medical, 13 dental and nine pharmacy clinical fellows
- £46m spent on leadership development in England and much more in the USA (Brewster, 2012; Beer et al 2016)

Since its establishment in 2011, FMLM has promoted the research evidence linking healthcare and medical leadership to patient outcomes and organisational performance. In 2015, FMLM published a review of the available research evidence, in conjunction with the King's Fund and Center for Creative Leadership, *Leadership and leadership development in healthcare: the evidence base* (West, Armit, Loewenthal, Eckert, West and Lee, 2015). Since then, FMLM has increased its activity in support of the generation of new evidence and the promotion of existing evidence through, for example, the annual *Leaders in Healthcare* conference and *BMJ Leader*.



There is growing recognition of the importance of leadership in the delivery of high-quality care for patients. For example, research evidence indicates an important link between leadership and team-working with improved quality and mortality (Shipton, Armstrong, West, Dawson 2008), (West, Borrill, Dawson, Scully, Carter, Anelay, Patterson, Waring, 2002). With regards to medical leadership specifically, research in the USA has found a 25% quality premium in US hospitals led by doctors (Goodall, 2011) and that hospitals in physician-led systems had higher quality ratings and more inpatient days per hospital bed without affecting financial performance (Tasi, Keswani and Bozic, 2017). In the UK, a positive link has been found between the number of clinicians on hospital boards and organisational performance, patient satisfaction and morbidity rates (Veronesi, Kirkpatrick, Vallascas, 2013). This study also shows that when the percentage of doctors on boards is reduced, even by 10 per cent, there is a marked consequence for performance (Veronesi et al, 2013). The importance of medical engagement beyond board level is also recognised in studies using the UK medical engagement scale. Organisations with greater medical engagement have been found to experience lower mortality rates, fewer serious incidents, higher levels of service provision, sound financial status, higher delivery of targets and core standards (Spurgeon, Mazelan and Barwell, 2012).

FMLM research strategy

This has been developed through a consultative process with academics in the healthcare policy and leadership field across the UK and internationally. Semi-structured interviews sought to uncover research gaps and explore where FMLM would be best placed to contribute. The strategy has also been informed by the 2015 review of the research evidence to date and for the first time explicitly describes FMLM's approach: the areas to focus upon; how to deliver them; and how to monitor progress. FMLM believes that by articulating its research priorities and principles it will:

- Provide a clearer understanding of the role of research evidence within the Faculty's wider objectives – in particular, to articulate how better healthcare can be delivered through better leadership
- Maintain focus on areas and questions that are of strategic importance to the organisation
- Achieve better coherence between the evidence and improving development programmes
- Inform the FMLM advocacy role
- Inform potential funders and research collaborators of the added value of FMLM as a research partner organisation
- Engage the FMLM membership in research studies, the design of research studies and in using research evidence in their daily practice
- Provide a basis for developing new academic partnerships and collaborations with others interested in leadership
- Promote a culture of evidence-based leadership and leadership development within UK healthcare
- Maximise the benefits of research evidence for FMLM members and stakeholders.



The role of research evidence in the work of FMLM

Evidence-based decision-making in clinical medicine is well-established, with research being strongly encouraged within the medical and scientific professional communities. Consequently, the UK standards of medical training and practice are highly regarded throughout the world. FMLM believes the same rigour is also needed for leadership, particularly given the very large investment in improving leadership in the UK and other parts of the world (Beer, Finnstrom, Schrader, 2016; Brewster, 2012). An evidence-based approach will help FMLM, along with policy makers, commissioners and providers of leadership programmes, as well as practitioners, to make well informed decisions by identifying the best available evidence.

Research is a core activity which contributes to FMLM's charitable objectives:

- For the public benefit, to advance education and knowledge in the field of medical leadership and management and promote research in all aspects of the subject and to publish the useful results; and
- For the public benefit, to advance health through setting the highest professional standards and competences for medical leadership, management and quality improvement.

Therefore, FMLM's prime focus is to support research which has practical implications for doctors and dentists across the UK. This will inform leadership development and educational activities; FMLM's *Leadership and Management Standards for Medical Professionals* and FMLM policy.

Whilst research evidence will always be the gold standard, there are large areas where it is lacking and others where context dictates that research evidence will always be hard to come by. For example, the evidence linking leadership to clinical outcomes usually demonstrates association, not causality. FMLM, like others, must use the best evidence available and does so advisedly.



FMLM research strategic objectives and priorities

Objective 1: Establish academic partnerships

FMLM is committed to undertaking and promoting high quality research through partnerships with researchers and academic institutions with expertise and experience in leadership and leadership development research. This was strongly endorsed in the recent consultation with UK and international academics, all of whom expressed a strong desire to work with FMLM.

Academic partnerships will provide the means through which FMLM can:

- Contribute to and promote high quality research
- Link the FMLM membership to the research community
- Influence research questions pertinent to leadership policy and practice
- Advocate for and support access to research funding
- Connect with the national and international research community, raise its profile and build opportunities for collaboration and sharing of information.

Partnerships may take many forms, from agreements to work together researching specific topics, to long term collaborations. FMLM will consider all partnership opportunities which are deemed beneficial to the charitable aims and strategic objectives.

Objective 2: Engage FMLM members and fellows

FMLM members have, by virtue of joining the organisation, expressed an interest in the organisation's vision and aims. Just as clinical practice is underpinned by scientific research evidence, FMLM members who are aspiring to, or currently in, leadership roles, must also understand that their development and practice is informed and supported as much as possible by research evidence. Through its journal, BMJ Leader, as well as Leaders in Healthcare conference, leadership development programmes and online media, FMLM will seek to disseminate research and invite members and fellows to be part of research activities. This may include following members' education and training, experience and career progression over time and/or responding to research questionnaires. FMLM may also connect members and fellows to academics interested in medical leadership and leadership development, as well as encouraging members to engage in research.



Objective 3: Influence the research agenda

The evidence-base review conducted by FMLM, the King's Fund and Center for Creative Leadership, demonstrated that more high-quality research was needed to understand leadership and leadership development in healthcare. FMLM's consultation with academics and members revealed that research should concentrate on the following key areas:

- Leadership development: what leadership development interventions work, with whom and when?
- Challenges for medical leaders: what challenges do doctors and dentists undertaking leadership roles face and how can they best be addressed?
- Medical Leadership as a Profession: how is medical leadership emerging as a new profession or specialty and what does this mean in the wider healthcare context?
- Context: how does context, such as sector, geography, or hierarchy, influence medical leadership practice and what does this mean for support and development?
- Conditions: what are the conditions which support or inhibit medical leaders and leadership and how can these be addressed?

Objective 4: Advise research funders

There is a variety of national funders of healthcare research with an interest in the role of leaders and leadership. FMLM, with its experience and expertise in medical leadership practice and knowledge of the healthcare leadership and leadership development research, is in an ideal position (with academic partners) to support and guide research funders on the questions which need to be asked and answered. Over the coming years, FMLM will work with funders and academic partners to identify and research key questions.

Objective 5: Promote and disseminate research evidence

In establishing BMJ Leader, FMLM's aim is to ensure doctors and other healthcare professionals have access to the most recent and relevant research evidence on healthcare leadership, the opportunity to learn about existing, relevant research outside of healthcare and publish their own research. BMJ Leader will continue to be a critical part of how FMLM promotes and disseminates research evidence. The number of research submissions are increasing at an encouraging rate, alongside growing international interest.

In the past five years, the research stream within the Leaders in Healthcare conference has grown, with submissions from academics with expertise in healthcare leadership research and medical and other healthcare practitioners. FMLM will continue to work closely with BMJ and BMJ Leader to develop the research stream within both initiatives. FMLM will also seek to grow its current, modest presentations at academic conferences, thus raising the profile of the organisation as well as contributing to the research agenda.

Through FMLM Applied and its leadership development programmes, FMLM will continue to share research evidence and encourage participants to utilise this in their day to day practice.



How FMLM delivers its research strategy

Guiding principles and processes

The key principles guiding the research strategy are as follows:

- All research supported by FMLM should focus on a clearly defined question or problem and be grounded in existing literature, use valid research methods, tools and adhere to academic principles and procedures
- All individuals involved in research design and implementation should be trained in the appropriate research methods and have a full understanding of the subject area
- All participants should be informed about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research and appropriate ethics clearance should be obtained where required
- The independence of research should be clearly described and any conflicts of interest or partiality should be declared.

FMLM will support research which helps to inform policy and/or practice for the benefit of both practitioners and patients. This will include:

- Primary research, which collects data first-hand through field research
- Secondary research, which may involve systematic literature reviews or the collation and analysis of data that already exists
- High quality evaluation of leadership development initiatives
- Methodological approaches including quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches.

Roles and responsibilities

In the current organisational structure, the prime responsibility for the research agenda rests with the Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer. Given this limited resource, developing academic partnerships is critical to the pursuit of generating new research evidence.

The FMLM Applied Associate network is important to support the dissemination of research evidence into practice. FMLM's policy and communications lead is key to promoting research opportunities and findings to our membership and wider stakeholders.

FMLM will seek to involve staff, associates, members and fellows in determining research projects, including design and implementation where appropriate.

Monitoring progress and quality assurance

The implementation of this strategy will be monitored annually to assess progress against the strategic objectives and ensure the research agenda is supporting the overall aims of the charity.

FMLM will assess progress using a set of indicators:

- Number of academic partnerships (with individuals and institutions) established
- Evaluation of Leaders in Healthcare research programme
- BMJ Leader performance metrics
- Number of academic conferences attended
- Number of academic papers published by FMLM staff and associates.



References

Beer, M., Finnstrom, M., Schrader, D. (2016) Why Leadership Training Fails—and What to Do About It, *Harvard Business Review*, October. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-leadership-training-fails-and-what-to-do-about-it> [Accessed: 29 January 2020].

Brewster, J. (2012) NHS Leadership Academy to launch largest ever development programme: leading with compassion, NHS Choices. NHS. Available at: <https://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/news/nhs-leadership-academy-to-launch-largest-ever-development-programme-leading-with-compassion/> [Accessed: 29 January 2020].

General Medical Council (2019) The State Of Medical Education And Practice In The UK 2019. Available at: https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/somep-2019---full-report_pdf-81131156.pdf?la=en&hash=B80CB05CE8596E6D2386E89CBC3FDB60BFAAE3CF [Accessed 11 March 2020].

Goodall, A. (2011) Physician-leaders and hospital performance: Is there an association? *Social Science and Medicine*, 73(4), 535-539.

Spurgeon, P., Mazelan, P. and Barwell, F. (2012) Why physician involvement can inspire higher performing healthcare, *Health Service Journal*, 19 July.

Stewart, C. (2020) *UK: Number Of Registered Doctors* [online] Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/698278/registered-doctors-united-kingdom-uk-by-age/> [Accessed 3 March 2020].

Tasi, M. Keswani, A. and Bozic, K. (2017) Does physician leadership affect hospital quality, operational efficiency, and financial performance? *Health Care Management Review*, July 11.

Veronesi, G., Kirkpatrick, I. and Vallascas, F. (2013) Clinicians on the Board: What difference does it make? *Social Science and Medicine*, 77, January.

West, M., Armit, K., Loewenthal, L., Eckert, R., West, T. and Lee, A. (2015) *Leadership and Leadership Development in Healthcare: The Evidence Base*. London, Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management.

West, M., Borrill, C., Dawson, J., Scully, J., Carter, M., Anelay, S., Patterson, M., Waring, J. (2002) The link between the Management of People & Patient Mortality in Acute Hospitals. *International Journal of Human Resources Management*, 13(8), 1299-1310.