

# Research Briefing February 2026

## News and Events

- [New research priorities identified for childhood food allergy](#)- Led by the [University of Bristol's CAESAR team](#), the work was carried out through a [James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership](#) (PSP). The process brought together patients, carers and clinicians to agree which unanswered research questions matter most to those living with and treating childhood food allergy.
- The NIHR welcomes the government's new [National Cancer Plan](#), restating a commitment to driving the research that will transform survival rates for some of the UK's biggest killers and most challenging diseases. With funding and leadership from the Department of Health and Social Care, the NIHR is providing the clinical infrastructure and financial backing to move life-saving cancer treatments from the laboratory bench to the bedside. Read more [here](#).

## New Funding and Training opportunities

- [NIHR is improving care for people with multiple long-term conditions \(MLTC\) by jointly investing £17.9 million in 3 innovative new research partnerships](#). The partnerships are funded through the Systems Engineering Innovation Partnerships for Multiple long-term Conditions (SEISMIC) Programme. Funded for 5 years, the partnerships aim to improve health and care services for people with MLTC. They bring together 2 distinct research disciplines - systems engineering and health care evaluation.
- [University of East Anglia researchers have been awarded a share of £15.3 million to tackle real-world health and care challenges across the region and beyond](#). The funding comes from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) – and is part of a wider £157 million investment over five years across 10 Applied Research Collaborations (ARC). At UEA, the funding will go towards research tackling mental health inequalities, dementia, and improving palliative and end-of-life care, among other things.

## New Research

- **Survey on Dementia Recording in Primary Care.** Primary care professionals (GPs, practice nurses, and other primary care HPs) are invited to take part in a nationally funded research study exploring how dementia diagnoses, subtypes, and associated modifiable risk factors are recorded within electronic health records (EHRs). The study aims to better understand how dementia-related information is captured in routine practice and to identify barriers and facilitators to recording dementia subtypes and risk factor data. **Survey link:** <https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/liverpool/demographics-spin-d>
- **What are the variations in NHS clinical pathways for postnatal women accessing care for prolapse?** This short survey <https://redcap-camide.srcp.hpc.cam.ac.uk/surveys/?s=T74RAL4DDM4N8XMM> will help researchers understand differences in referral access, place of treatment and delivery of the service. The survey is aimed at NHS managers (anyone who manages within a primary care network as postnatal women come to see their GP) and clinicians. No identifiable information will be collected. The survey will take 5-10 minutes.
- [Study launches to tackle leading cause of maternal death](#)-A major new NIHR-supported national study aims to transform understanding of heart disease in pregnancy, the leading cause of maternal mortality and serious complications in the UK. It accounts for more than one third of pregnancy-related maternal deaths. The PREG-HEART (PREGnancy, HEART Health and Cardiovascular Disease) study will create the first UK-wide, direct-to-patient research platform dedicated to heart health in pregnancy.
- [The NIHR Research Programme for Social Care \(RPSC\) has awarded £2.8 million in funding to 9 new projects](#) These include improving sexual and relationship support for autistic people, an assessment

of home care delivery for older adults living at home, older men's experience of self-neglect and hoarding, and the issue of waiting in social care.

- [UK study tests new preventative therapy for contagious gut infection](#) A major new UK study into a life-threatening and highly contagious gut infection has begun. Researchers have recruited the first patient in the world to test a new preventative therapy. Recruiting the first patient also highlights the impact of the [NIHR UK Vaccine Innovation Pathway](#) (VIP). VIP brings together life sciences companies, the NHS and research partners to speed up clinical trials. This helps patients access new treatments sooner and strengthens the UK's life sciences sector.

## Research Findings and Reports

- [High levels of testosterone in the blood raise risk of coronary artery disease in men](#) according to research published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*. Researchers found that for men, having genetically higher testosterone was linked to a 17% higher risk of coronary artery disease. Previous studies have suggested that an individual's risk of coronary artery disease is 7.3% over their lifetime – testosterone supplementation would raise this to 8.5%. The increased risk seemed to be in part because testosterone raises blood pressure.
- [New study highlights inequities and missed opportunities in breast cancer risk assessment in England](#)- Published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, researchers have undertaken the first system-wide analysis of breast cancer risk assessment, management and screening pathways in England. While NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidance recommends enhanced screening and risk reducing options for women at increased risk, the study finds that access to these services is often inconsistent and shaped more by geography and socioeconomic factors than by clinical needs.
- [Who gets menopause treatment – and who is left out?](#) The research, published in *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, brought together evidence from 53 studies conducted across more than 20 countries to explore who is most and least likely to use HRT. Drawing on data from hundreds of thousands of women over several decades, the study is the largest review of its kind and offers a global snapshot of menopause care.
- [Reducing salt in everyday foods could prevent tens of thousands of heart attacks and strokes, new study finds](#) The study, published in the American Heart Association's Journal *Hypertension*, examined how much salt people in the UK currently consume from packaged and takeaway foods, and estimated what would happen if all food categories covered by the government's 2024 salt targets met those goals.
- [AI stethoscope can help spot 'silent epidemic' of heart valve disease earlier than GPs, study suggests](#)- Researchers led by the University of Cambridge analysed heart sounds from nearly 1,800 patients using an AI algorithm trained to recognise valve disease, a condition that often goes undiagnosed until it becomes life-threatening. The AI correctly identified 98% of patients with severe aortic stenosis, the most common form of valve disease requiring surgery, and 94% of those with severe mitral regurgitation, where the heart valve doesn't fully close and blood leaks backwards across the valve.
- [New study reveals unmet needs in menopause care for people with autoimmune diseases](#)-A major international study from the Menopause MATTERS Project has found that people living with autoimmune diseases report significantly lower satisfaction and more challenging experiences with menopause care, compared to those without autoimmune conditions. Access to [published paper](#).
- [Babies with an increased likelihood of autism may struggle to settle into deep, restorative sleep, according to a new study from UEA](#). Researchers studied the link between sleep and sensory sensitivity, which is common in neurodivergent infants. They found that when babies with this trait napped in a noisy environment, their deep sleep was considerably disrupted. The study is published in the journal *Sleep*.