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Dear Colleagues

MCRN Clinical Studies Group (Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition)

I wrote to you several months ago regarding this matter. It appears that not all may have received my letter, and so I thought I would contact you again. This is also an opportunity to update you on subsequent developments regarding MCRN.

You will be aware that there have been significant developments recently in relation to paediatric clinical trials in the UK. The importance of promoting trials is now receiving widespread recognition. As you know, there are a number of barriers that have tended to discourage the proper evaluation of medicines for children. The Department of Health has funded a UK Medicines for Children Research Network (MCRN) to try to counter some of these disincentives.

UK MCRN is based in Liverpool. Under that central coordination a series of six Local Research Networks (LRNs) has recently been established in England to provide support and infrastructure for clinical trials. Similar networks are developing in Scotland and Wales. Further information is available on the MCRN website (above).

MCRN established a series of Clinical Studies Groups (CSGs) covering various clinical research areas. A CSG for paediatric gastroenterology, hepatology and nutrition has been formed. The purpose of the CSG is to help in the development of a portfolio of high quality clinical trials for adoption by the MCRN. This is therefore an important opportunity for all of us.

At present our CSG consists of a core group of clinical specialists (n=7) in gastroenterology, hepatology and nutrition. Over the coming months the group will enlarge and diversify. It is intended that it will be multidisciplinary with wider expertise and interests represented.

The CSG intends to be outward looking, and welcomes the views and advice of all those with an interest in clinical trial development. We are working closely with relevant professional societies to identify and develop clinical trial proposals. We also hope to rely on colleagues from outside of the group to provide expert review and advice on trial proposals.

We have written to a wide range of individuals asking for their views, particularly in relation to the need for trials in their own particular research and clinical areas. We welcome suggestions from all who are interested, and in particular we would also value your views on priorities for trial development. It will be important in the coming months to establish such priorities, so that in collaboration with colleagues we can develop appropriate high quality trial proposals.

The CSGs are the primary portal of entry for clinical trials to be run using the resources of the MCRN. We would therefore be pleased to hear from you regarding single centre and multi-centre clinical trials that you may be considering or planning if you think it would be advantageous to run them through the network. Currently any studies adopted by the network will need to be adequately funded from a source open to national competition. The network will be able to offer expertise and administrative support. Proposals could be usefully discussed at an early phase in their development, but fully developed proposals are also welcomed. The CSG would hope to work with you towards submission of your proposal to the MCRN Trials Adoption Committee.

I am very happy to discuss the process with you if you wish.

We are fortunate to have had agreement to the establishment of a CSG dedicated to our related specialties. I hope that we will be able to take full advantage of this to gain access to the MCRN.

We will keep you informed of future developments.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Dr M Stephen Murphy
Chair, CSG (Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition)