



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Dr Frank Atherton
Prif Swyddog Meddygol/Cyfarwyddwr Meddygol, GIG Cymru
Chief Medical Officer/Medical Director NHS Wales

The Chair and Board of Invest in ME Research

info@investinme.org

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Dear Colleague

Thank you for your recent emails regarding funding for ME research. Please accept my apologies for the late response, unfortunately my team cannot find any record of your previous correspondence on this matter.

With regards to ME/CFS research I can advise you that Health and Care Research Wales has a wide variety of Health and Social Care grant scheme programmes that enable researchers with a research interest in ME/CFS to apply for funding. Awards are funded on a competitive basis and are open to all eligible researchers based in Wales.

Whilst currently there are no ME/CFS research studies being funded, Health and Care Research Wales is always looking to fund high quality research projects that cover areas which historically may not have been at the front of the research path across Wales. The Welsh Government, through Health and Care Research Wales, provides approximately £43million funding for research within Wales each year; this includes support for the broad range of research activities that take place across NHS Wales.

Health and Care Research Wales also funds a comprehensive research infrastructure to support high quality health and social care research undertaken in Wales, through its partners it also provides a broad support and delivery network that gives assistance to clinical research studies undertaken throughout sites in NHS Wales.

The programme of research can be accessed here:

<https://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/funding/> and if you would like to discuss funding opportunities, please contact: Michael.Bowdery@gov.wales

You may also be interested to know that from a policy perspective much good work is being carried out across Wales. This work is being taken forward by the ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia Implementation Group, chaired by Owen Hughes, Head of Pain and Fatigue Management Service at Powys Teaching Health Board. The group consists of representatives from health boards across Wales as well as Welsh Government and third sector representatives and they meet 3-4 times per year to discuss matters in relation to these health conditions. They regularly share good practice and discuss new and innovative ideas. One of the key projects the group is currently looking at is refreshing the care pathways for ME/CFS and fibromyalgia so that health professionals have clear information on how to help people they suspect of suffering from these conditions and patients know what to expect.



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Ffon/Tel: 03000257028
Parc Cathays, Caerdydd CF10 3NQ Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ
Eboost/Email: PSChiefMedicalOfficer@wales.gsi.gov.uk

This work is in the early stages. However, in addition, there is considerable good work already going on around Wales. For example, a telehealth project in Powys where patients are offered Skype assessments is proving particularly useful for people with ME/CFS, as it negates the need to travel long distances in rural health board areas. Powys Teaching Health Board are also offering 'Invest in your health', a six week self-management programme which has had positive feedback from service users. GP training is also provided using the Skype programme. Additionally Aneurin Bevan University Health Board offer a six week stress and four week mindfulness course which people can attend without the need for referral. These courses are proving helpful in managing the mental and emotional impacts of living with ME/CFS.

You may also be interested to know that over the last two years, in conjunction with clinicians, academics and patient representatives from across Wales, we have been working on a framework aimed at helping people who suffer from persistent pain. This document will be submitted for Ministerial clearance shortly and we anticipate it will be published in the spring.

I hope this goes some way towards reassuring you that research funding is available and open for applications and that we are working closely with partner agencies to develop appropriate policies to help those suffering from ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Atherton', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

DR FRANK ATHERTON