



## Your EMPAN Quarterly – Winter 2025 Holiday Edition

Warmest holiday wishes from the **EMPAN team** to all our East Midlands paediatric trainees, consultants, and supporters!

As 2025 draws to a close with festive lights twinkling, family gatherings, and well-deserved breaks from clinical rotations, this special **Q4 edition** arrives just in time to **inspire your academic plans** for the year ahead.

In the spirit of celebration and renewal, we spotlight the triumphs from **EMIPS Conference 2025**, where trainees shone with prize-winning oral and poster presentations covering childhood cancer diagnosis, cardiology insights, quality improvement innovations, and education updates.

You'll also discover **fully funded PhD opportunities** from Universities of Nottingham and Leicester, **hands-on research training via the NIHR Associate PI scheme** with local mentorship and East Midlands study lists, plus the **RCPCH Child Health Research Survey** urgently seeking your input to advocate for better child health funding and support. Plus, don't miss **TREES webinars** and the **Vertex Physicians in Pharma programme** to supercharge your **Progress+ research domain**.

From new trainees finding their footing to seasoned academics mentoring the next generation, your involvement continues to drive meaningful change in regional paediatrics. Thank you for your passion, contributions, and collaboration throughout 2025—here's to an inspiring 2026 filled with breakthroughs, publications, and shared successes!

In this edition you will find:

- **EMIPS 2025 Conference Highlights** and prize-winning posters
- **Fully funded PhD opportunities** in neonatal/PICU mental health
- **NIHR Associate PI scheme** with East Midlands study list and trainee success story
- **RCPCH Child Health Research Survey** – your 2-minute chance to shape the future
- **Vertex Physicians in Pharma programme** and **TREES webinar updates**

Best wishes,  
**Hayat Nassar**

*EMPAN Communication Lead*



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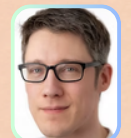
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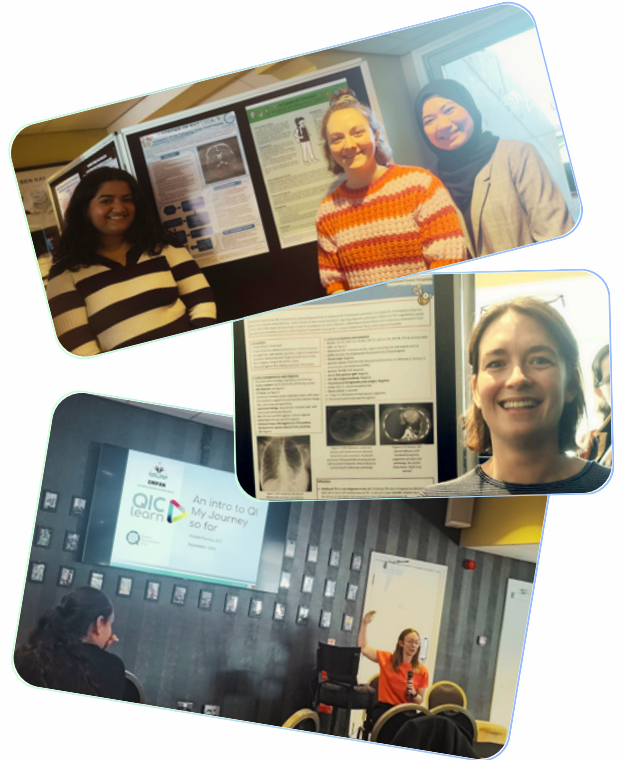


## emips Conference 2025: Trainees Shine at Leicester Tigers

**East Midlands School of Paediatrics Conference 2025** brought trainees and consultants together at Leicester Tigers Stadium for a full day of talks, posters and networking, spanning childhood cancer diagnosis, cardiology, child health inequalities, QI and education.

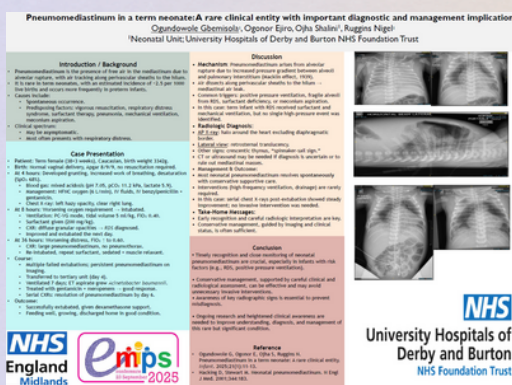
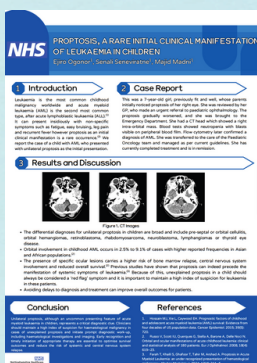
Sessions combined invited speakers, trainee-led projects and updates from EMPAN and the Education & Training Committee, with prizes awarded for the best oral and poster presentations, including **first prize for Dr Freya Patel's FY2 project "Right on Time"** on improving prompt completion of discharge summaries.

From next year, **EMIPS 2026** will be co-organised by EMPAN and the Education Committee, and colleagues are invited to share suggestions for future content by emailing [eastmidspan@gmail.com](mailto:eastmidspan@gmail.com) with the subject line **"EMIPS 2026"**



## Award-Worthy Posters: Highlights in Focus

A 7-year-old girl presented with unilateral proptosis as the first sign of acute myeloid leukaemia (AML), confirmed by CT and blood film. This rare case stresses unexplained proptosis as a red-flag prompting urgent haematological checks to avoid diagnostic delays.



A term neonate (38+3 weeks) developed respiratory distress at 4 hours, diagnosed with RDS and later large pneumomediastinum on CXR after ventilation and surfactant. Classic signs included halo around the heart and retrosternal translucency. Conservative management with serial imaging and supportive care led to full recovery by day 6, avoiding invasive interventions.

An 8-year-old boy with chronic knee pain/swelling was initially diagnosed with JIA but MRI revealed synovial vascular malformation. Managed with sclerotherapy at GOSH, this highlights imaging and MDT input for atypical joint cases unresponsive to NSAIDs





## Opportunities for Research, Training and Fellowships



**University of  
Nottingham**  
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

### Fully Funded Clinical PhD in Digital Neonatal Mental Health

Dear Colleagues

There is an exciting opportunity for a **fully paid clinical PhD** (for all healthcare professionals) to start with us at the **University of Nottingham** next year. We will be looking for those interested in potentially considering a career in **neonatal research** and are keen to undertake a **3 year fully supported PhD**. The PhD is using two **digital tools** both using apps to diagnose and support **parent/carer mental health** on the **NICU**. The apps are developed and will aim to 1) **identify changing mood** in the parent/carer, 2) **support mental wellbeing**. One system uses **AI** to track mood through **facial imaging**.

The successful applicant will continue to receive their normal NHS salary and sick leave etc., have their PhD fees paid (about £5,300/yr) and have costs to support their project. They can spend up to 20% of their time continuing day time NHS role.

There are about **20 PhD projects** being offered around the Midlands with **four likely to be awarded**. With the right support for strong, committed candidates there is a chance of success!

[Please see the project here](#) along with more information on the eligibility and application process.

Any questions, please do get in contact with me especially if keen to apply as you'll need our support with this.

Best wishes

**Prof Don Sharkey**

[don.sharkey@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:don.sharkey@nottingham.ac.uk)

Neonatal Consultant

Nottingham Centre for Neonatal Care



**University of  
Leicester**



### Fully funded PhD – Parental Mental Health After PICU

Dear all,

The **University of Leicester** offers a **fully funded PhD** focused on **mental health**:

**[2026 Sarah Seaton - Midlands Mental Health and Neurosciences PhD Programme](#)**

#### **Understanding Parental Mental Health and Resilience Following Paediatric Intensive Care Admission**

##### **Background:**

This project investigates mental health outcomes for parents of children admitted to **PICUs**. **PTSD** affects **10-40%** of this group, persisting post-discharge. With more children living with lifelong conditions, families face added pressure. While distress is well-documented, resilience factors remain understudied.

##### **Aims:**

1. **Quantify prevalence/trajectory of symptoms** (depression, anxiety, PTSD) using validated tools and longitudinal data.
2. **Identify predictors of poor mental health/resilience** (demographic, clinical, psychosocial).
3. **Explore resilience experiences** via qualitative parent interviews (coping, support systems).

##### **Conclusion:**

This mixed-methods study will inform targeted interventions for post-PICU families, supporting those navigating lifelong conditions.

Contact: [sarah.seaton@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.seaton@leicester.ac.uk)





## Opportunities for Research, Training and Fellowships



### Stipend-funded PhD: Respiratory Care Pathways

Dear all,

In addition to the above, please see another exciting opportunity for a **stipend-funded** PhD at the University of Leicester:

#### [Exploring Care Pathways in Children with Respiratory Disease Prior to Critical Care Admission: A Data-Driven Approach](#)

Second Supervisor: **Dr David Lo**, Respiratory Sciences, University of Leicester

Additional Supervisor: **Prof Laila J Tata**, Lifespan and Population Health Unit, School of Medicine & Centre for Perinatal Research, University of Nottingham

Each year, ~**18,500 children** are admitted to **PICUs** across the UK and Ireland, many due to respiratory conditions like **bronchiolitis**.

Some experience multiple healthcare interactions beforehand, yet these trajectories remain poorly understood.

This PhD will use large-scale linked datasets (**Clinical Practice Research Datalink, Hospital Episode Statistics, Paediatric Intensive Care Audit Network**) to map children's interactions with GP visits, ED attendances, and hospital admissions prior to PICU—focusing on respiratory disease.

Advanced statistical methods (**multistate modelling, sequence analysis**) will identify pathways, risk factors, and inequalities in access/outcomes by **ethnicity** and **socioeconomic status**. Findings will inform **earlier interventions** and **deterioration recognition** for safer paediatric care. Data-driven project for candidates with strong **quantitative skills** and **child health** interest, with supervision from Leicester and Nottingham.

#### Enquiries:

Project: [Sarah.seaton@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:Sarah.seaton@leicester.ac.uk)

Programme: [aimphd@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:aimphd@leicester.ac.uk)

Apply: <https://more.bham.ac.uk/mrc-aim/phd-opportunities/>



### Fully funded Vertex Physicians in Pharma programme

RCPCH in collaboration with **Vertex** are delighted to share the launch of the **Vertex Physicians in Pharma Programme (VPiPP)**, a **fully funded, one-year industry placement** for paediatricians in clinical training or paediatricians who have recently completed training.



#### Physicians in Pharmaceuticals Programme

*A unique opportunity to develop leaders of the future*

The Vertex Physicians in Pharmaceuticals Programme (VPiPP) is a unique, one-year work placement for exceptional physicians in training, with diverse backgrounds and experiences, who wish to enrich their curriculum and knowledge by understanding and experiencing pharmaceutical medicine. Physicians will be integrated into Vertex Medical Affairs International and will contribute to activities in one or more of Vertex's therapeutic areas. There will be opportunities to understand other areas of Pharmaceutical Medicine such as Clinical Development, Patient Safety and Regulatory Affairs through rotations and shadowing. Candidates will be based at Vertex's International HQ based at Paddington, London on a hybrid basis.

Learn more at

[www.vrtx.com/careers](http://www.vrtx.com/careers)

APPLY BY  
16 JANUARY



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## NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

Interested in working on and delivering clinical research as a trainee? If so, consider applying for the

### Associate Principal Investigator (PI) scheme



#### Interested in Clinical Research? Join the API Scheme!

Apply for the **Associate Principal Investigator (PI)** scheme – a six month in-work training opportunity to deliver an NIHR portfolio trial under local PI mentorship, Earn NIHR certification endorsed by the RCPCH.

##### Eligibility Criteria

- Healthcare professionals who do not primarily work in research but want to gain research experience on a NIHR **Portfolio research study**
- Commit to work on the study at the same site/hospital for 6 months (so plan early!)
- Get approval from the local PI (ie lead for the research study in the local site/hospital)

##### Learn More and Apply:

Find more information on the [NIHR](#) website and hear directly from our trainee experience [here](#).



#### What to do?

##### Find a suitable study for your local site/hospital.

- Plan early. It is advisable to start contacting the local PI to get things set up before you start your attachment at a local site/hospital (ideally as soon as you know your hospital placement).
- You can use the [live national dashboard](#) to find eligible studies. EM-PAN has also compiled a [list of eligible studies and PI contact details for studies within the East Midlands](#). We endeavour to keep the list as updated as possible but do check with the local research team or the national dashboard.

##### Get approval from local PI (i.e. lead for the research study in the local site/hospital)

- You can find the contact details on the [EM-PAN list](#) or local research leads. Failing that, please email [associatepischeme@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:associatepischeme@nihr.ac.uk) for further support.
- You do not need formal approval from the school or apply for out of programme to be part of the Associate PI scheme.

##### Apply to be an **Associate PI scheme trainee on NIHR Learn**.

#### Support from the East Midlands School of Paediatrics Board

- The School is very supportive of Paediatric trainees in applying for the Associate PI scheme.
- You do not need formal approval from the school nor apply for out of programme to be part of the Associate PI scheme.
- Plan early and identify eligible studies as soon as you know your attachment. The School is unable to guarantee placement based on being part of the Associate PI scheme. However, most hospitals in the region have at least one study as part of the Associate PI scheme.
- Trainees should be able to use their time allocated for Supporting Professional Activities (SPA) as outlined in the RCPCH training charter to complete the Associate PI scheme. The school is unable to provide further SPA time for the Associate PI scheme.

Success story from local trainee: [Video from Dr Rashida Javed](#)





## Have Your Say on the Future of Child Health Research

Child health research in the UK has repeatedly been highlighted by RCPCH as an area needing stronger investment, coordination and support for clinicians who wish to be involved. This new College survey aims to build a clearer picture of how paediatricians currently take part in research, what helps them to do so, and where practical or structural barriers still exist, so that future RCPCH programmes, guidance and advocacy can be better tailored to support paediatricians to lead and deliver high-quality child health research.



### CHILD HEALTH SURVEY

Children make up over 20% of our population, yet child health research receives only 5% of total funding. We need to better understand the role paediatricians play in research and the barriers you face.

Please take 2 minutes to complete our short survey. We will ask a few questions about you and your participation in child health research.

Your insights are vital to ensuring that child health receives the recognition and investment it deserves.

Please take part via:

[https://qualtricsxmwhzj9qv8q.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1yJtgTEFnsjBd6m](https://qualtricsxmwhzj9qv8q.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1yJtgTEFnsjBd6m)



Professor May Ng OBE  
Officer for Research



Professor Will Carroll  
Officer for Research

## Trainee Research nEtwork Education Seminars (TREES)

TREES is a monthly webinar series from the RCPCH Trainee Research Network, designed especially for paediatricians in training. Streaming on the last Tuesday of every month, each seminar helps trainees get involved in research and develop key capabilities in the Progress+ curriculum's research and scholarship domain.

[Read more >](#)

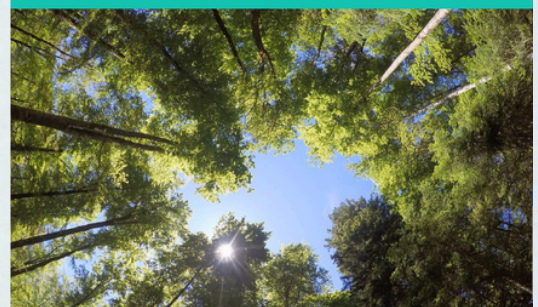
When you [register](#) for this webinar via [MedAll](#), you can opt in to get notified of upcoming TREES sessions and watch previous sessions on-demand through that platform.

[Register now >](#)

**Date: 27 January 2026 - 25 August 2026**

### RCPCH Trainee research network education series (TREES)

Last Tuesday of the month, 13.00-13.45



Sign up using the QR code or visit:  
<https://ow.ly/rQEX50UT6cF>



Thank you for reading this edition of the EMPAN Newsletter!

Stay connected, explore new opportunities, and make the most of the resources available through EMPAN and EMIP website.

If you have any suggestions or want to get involved, reach out to us at [eastmidspan@gmail.com](mailto:eastmidspan@gmail.com). See you in the next issue!

