



**Paediatric  
Critical  
Care  
Research**

## **Success Stories: Dr Hannah Mitchell**



Congratulations to Hannah Mitchell for being awarded an NIHR Doctoral Training Fellowship to pursue her PhD level research; at **PCC Research Incubator**, we are very proud of Hannah's achievement and want all the PCC Research Community to benefit from their experience; we have asked Hannah a few questions about her award.

### **Q1) Hannah, what inspired you to apply for the NIHR Doctoral Fellowship?**

I completed a Master's in Epidemiology and worked on projects examining how racism and deprivation affect paediatric acute care outcomes. In 2022, I began analysing PICANet data with Ram ( Professor. to investigate how outcomes of children admitted to intensive care differ according to their ethnicity or the level of deprivation in the place where they live. We found that children living in more deprived areas and children of Asian ethnicity were significantly more likely to die in intensive care even after accounting for how sick they were on admission. The reasons remain unclear, and I wanted to explore this further using different approaches. The NIHR DF seemed ideal, providing both research time and training in new methodologies.

### **Q2) What will your research focus on?**

My research will focus on exploring the pathways behind these disparities, particularly by linking PICANet with other NHS databases to better understand patients' medical backgrounds, comorbidities and healthcare interactions before admission. There will also be a qualitative component where I will speak directly to parents and PICU staff to hear about their firsthand experiences. The aim is to use these insights to improve care pathways for this vulnerable group of children.

**Q3) How did you find the application process/experience? Were there any aspects you found most or least useful?**

I don't think I had quite appreciated the amount of work involved in a fellowship application before I started! The initial proposal is a substantial piece of work which takes several months to prepare. The interview is with a panel of experienced researchers, so you need to be able to explain and defend your proposal. Don't be put off applying - there are a lot of people in the PCC community who were so helpful as I was applying. There are now a few of us in PCC research who have experience of applying for this award, and I am more than happy to talk with anyone who is considering applying!

**Q4) Could you give any aspiring PCC Researchers tips or suggestions on how to succeed in getting funded ?**

Passion for the project is key! I first took my project idea to Ram nearly four years ago, and it gradually developed—from an initial concept to preliminary data analysis during an academic clinical fellowship, and eventually into a full funding application.

Balancing clinical and research time is challenging, so securing funding to protect research time is crucial. There are lots of grants around so ask for advice about what to apply for.

Finally, just keep putting yourself forward for things. Unfortunately, rejection is part of the process – my first funding application for this project was unsuccessful, but I got lots of useful feedback which made this application much stronger.

**Q5) What do you feel will be the most impactful outcome of your research?**

I hope we can make tangible improvements to care pathways for children, informed by the real-life experiences of patients and their families. There is incredible cutting-edge research advancing PICU care, but the reality is we see big disparities in how children are accessing care and in their outcomes. Understanding how care is delivered across different groups is essential to ensuring all children benefit equally from medical advancements.

Many thanks for your time Hannah and good luck with your research.