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ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF PARAMEDIC RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN AIRWAYS-2

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- ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF PARAMEDIC RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN AIRWAYS-2

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Abstract

AIRWAYS-2 is an NIHR-funded study to determine the best initial approach to advanced airway management during out of hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA). Four NHS ambulance trusts are taking part in AIRWAYS-2: East Midlands, South Western, Yorkshire and East of England. One of the key challenges has been the need to recruit approximately 1300 study paramedics for the trial.

The three main challenges in engaging and recruiting paramedics to participate in AIRWAYS-2 have been:

- Concerns relating to the potential results of the trial and what this will mean for the continuation of intubation for paramedics
- Concerns relating to the restriction on paramedic choice of advanced airway in OHCA and potential skill erosion
- Provision of training over large geographical areas at a time when morale is low and many ambulance trusts have recruitment and retention issues.

How have these challenges been overcome?

- Communication: Identifying the most appropriate communication methods in each Trust e.g. face to face, email, internal trust operational updates
- Delivery of key messages: Emphasising why the trial is important and needed, and that its goal is not to remove intubation from paramedic practice. Obtaining the engagement of senior operational management to allay fears over impacts on service performance
- Valuing study paramedics: Paying clinicians overtime to attend training sessions, which contributes to their own continuing professional development
- Equity and opportunity: Delivery of multiple training sessions throughout each of the four ambulance trusts.

Key achievements

By November 2015, research paramedics had delivered nearly 350 training sessions and recruited in excess of 1300 paramedics to AIRWAYS-2.

Conclusion

The research paramedics leading AIRWAYS-2 have collaboratively, and successfully, overcome the main challenges relating to recruiting and engaging the paramedics in their Trusts. This should contribute to achieving the target patient sample size for the trial.