

How to find UK PET Trials: A guide for Researchers

PET trials database

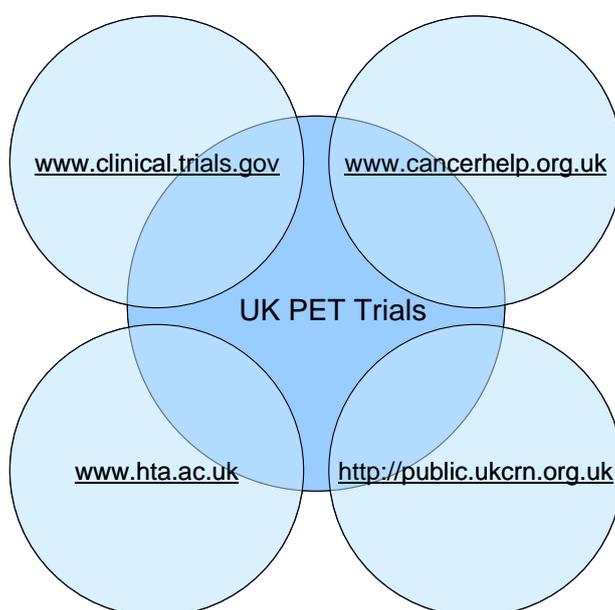
Until recently it has been extremely difficult to get an overview of past/present/future trials in the UK that include the use of PET. Researchers considering adding a PET element to a trial need access to information:

- To identify trials that are exploring a research question to better define the use of PET, either as a primary research question or as a PET sub-study
- To identify trials that include PET in some other way, e.g. to assess patient eligibility, a primary endpoint, or secondary endpoint

A database of UK PET clinical trials is available at www.ncri-pet.org.uk to support the PET community. This database provides an overview of past and present PET trials involving UK PET centres. The PRN is currently trying to identify a long-term sustainable mechanism to capture these trials for the benefit of the community; however, if these approaches do not produce a sustainable mechanism, researchers will need to continue to perform their own focussed literature searches, as the PRN PET trials database will gradually go out of date as new trials are initiated.

Where to search for PET clinical trials

The current PET trials database has been compiled from a number of information sources: ECMC PET centres, non-ECMC PET centres, direct contacts, UK funding bodies, and clinical trials websites. These sources have highlighted a range of trials that are funded by industry or public funding bodies. There is some duplication in their listings, which is only to be expected from independent data sources. From our work, we have found that the most efficient way of producing an overview of current activity is to search a particular grouping of websites: the CancerHelp UK website and/or one of three major clinical trials websites: Clinical trials.gov, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Network/NCRN and Health Technology Assessment (HTA). The Medical Research Council also funds PET trials, but at present it is not possible to filter out PET-specific trials via the MRC clinical trials website (http://www.ctu.mrc.ac.uk/study_search.aspx). Therefore, at present the best way to perform a satisfactory literature review of past and current PET trials is by searching the preceding four websites.



How to search for PET clinical trials

None of the four websites mentioned above specifically filter out information on PET trials, and each website has its own front page and format for searching for trials. Therefore, a particular search strategy is needed on each website to perform an effective search that will capture the subset of PET trials that is of interest. Moreover, some subsequent screening of the initial search results will be required to remove trials that are not of interest. Finally, it should be noted that it can be difficult to identify some key information categories associated with each PET trial (e.g. role of PET scan, radiotracer utilised) from the information displayed on these websites.

1. CancerHelp UK website

The CancerHelp UK website contains information on trials funded by CR-UK and several other funding bodies. Go to <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org/trials/> and search for all PET trials using the keyword 'PET'. Different trial categories can be screened by ticking up to three of the 'trials that apply' boxes ('are still recruiting'; 'have completed recruiting'; and 'have results'). If all three categories are included the search will identify the majority of the PET trials in the database. It will be necessary to manually screen each of the hits to identify trials that are relevant to the researcher. An advanced search option is also available, which allows customized searches to be performed.

2. Clinicaltrials.gov website

This website provides access to a huge number of clinical trials from many different countries, so it is advantageous to perform an advanced search, to restrict the search to a manageable number of hits. Go to <http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/search/advanced>. Within the advanced search, select 'UK' as the location and use both 'PET' and 'Cancer' as the keywords. Targeted searches (e.g. only involving particular tumour types) can also be run, by including specific keywords in the search (e.g. oesophageal) instead of 'cancer'.

3. UK Clinical Research Network/NCRN website

This website provides access to clinical trials being run in the UK that are funded by the NIHR, other areas of central Government, NIHR non-commercial Partners and to studies adopted by NIHR. Adopted studies include commercial contract research (industry-funded, industry-sponsored studies), Investigator-initiated, commercial-collaborative studies (Industry-funded, non-industry sponsored studies), non-commercial studies funded by overseas governments and non-commercial studies funded by overseas charities.

Go to <http://public.ukcrn.org.uk/search>. The best search strategy is to select 'cancer' as the topic of interest, search 'all' CSG's and screen for studies with 'PET' in the title. The studies registered on this website tend to be large late phase studies that are funded by public bodies and industry-funded trials that have been adopted by NCRN.

4. HTA website

The website contains information on the HTA research programme, which evaluates the effectiveness of different healthcare treatments and tests for those who use, manage and provide care in the NHS. Go to <http://www.hta.ac.uk/ProjectData/ProjectSearch.asp>. Tick the box to search 'Projects'. In section 5 (NHS Specialty) select 'nuclear medicine'. The search produces a mixed set of results that includes primary research (trials) and secondary research (systematic reviews) in a number of disease areas. Cancer specific trials can readily be identified from the study titles and abstracts. A manageable number of hits are produced facilitating trial identification from manual screening.