

# Educating healthcare professionals about familial hypercholesterolaemia



## Project Dates

**Project Start** 01/08/2020

**Project End** Ongoing

## Programmes

- > Commercialisation
- > CVD

### Educating healthcare professionals about familial hypercholesterolaemia: from a local University to a national MOOC

The NHS long term plan called for increased identification of people with familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH) which in turn leads to learning and education around the condition. In response, the Health Innovation Network announced funding led by Health Innovation North East and North Cumbria, for a five week course for healthcare professionals. The course was developed and deployed to 118 delegates by Northumbria University and a panel of experts in FH and genomic counselling, expert contributions included consultants, pharmacists, genetic counsellors, and nurses.

Due to high demand for the course, a Massive Open Online Course (MOCC) has been developed. The course equips healthcare professionals across the country to better identify and support people with FH. The course is free and can be accessed here.

## Contact Details



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“ The support of Health Innovation Network has been instrumental in designing and delivering this course. We would not have been able to develop this course and deliver to so many healthcare professionals without the funding and advice provided.

— **DR DEBBIE LEETHAM, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR/ SUBJECT SPECIALIST, NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY**

### **Challenge/Problem Identified**

The 2019 NHS Long Term Plan identified the need to identify, diagnose and support those with FH and provide access to genetic counselling.

In response to this plan, in 2020, the Health Innovation Network (formerly AHSN Network) launched a national familial hypercholesterolaemia and lipid programme. Lipid services and FH services varied hugely across England; some areas had long-established services and others had none. At that time there was limited education for non-specialist FH health professionals. To deliver a national programme, FH education needed to be accessible to a wide variety of non-specialist health professionals, particularly where there were no current lipid and FH services.

There were not sufficient HCPs who were trained to manage patients with FH including the subsequent genetic counselling and testing needed to meet the outcomes stated in the Long Term Plan.

### **Overview of innovation**

As the lead Health Innovation Network (HIN) for the national programme, Health Innovation NENC commissioned a five-day course (30 hours) to be delivered by Northumbria University over five weeks. The course was delivered virtually via 15 hours of on-screen learning followed by a further 15 hours of directed learning. A certificate of attendance was available to all, and a certificate of completion was awarded to those who completed the formative learning assessment.

The course was open to all healthcare professionals across England throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Information was disseminated through Health Innovation Networks (formerly AHSNs).

Due to the success of the course, a one-day workshop was developed with 95 delegates enrolling onto the workshops which were delivered 6 times over a six-month period. Subsequently to meet demand for such upskilling in FH a further innovation – a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) has been developed. [Access it here](#).

### **Action taken**

- Dr Debbie Leetham for Northumbria University was commissioned by HI NENC to write the course
- Dr Leetham liaised with experts in FH and genomic counselling during the writing process; expert contributions included consultants, pharmacists, genetic counsellors and nurses
- The course has been delivered to 118 delegates to date
- As a result of the success of the 5 week course, a one day face to face masterclass was developed; it was aimed at pharmacists and funded by the Genomic Unit NHS England
- As not all delegates have been able to attend the five week course or the masterclass a MOCC is being developed.

## Outcome

Since its launch in 2021 – Jan 2024, 118 staff have completed the five week FH course. The course has attracted a wide range of HCPs including GPs, nurses, pharmacists, consultants and biochemists; staff from both Primary Care and Secondary Care across England.

Feedback from delegates included:

*“It was at a pace that you didn’t feel rushed. Although clinical, the content was aimed correctly at all levels of HCP therefore could be presented to all involved in an FH service/Primary care. Good background knowledge to support whatever workstream being carried out”.*

*“I very much enjoyed the course due to the ease of access given it was online. It was great to have such a mix of professional peers on the course even though we were a small group. The variety of speakers gave a very good overall rounding of the topic and Deborah was a fantastic facilitator, always happy to help and support encouraging others in the group to participate”.*

*“One session I found most surprising and probably learnt the most from was the Paediatric session. Given my background is within adult Nursing I found this view point an eye opener and not one I would have previously considered”.*

66 staff have undertaken the one day masterclass (mainly pharmacists and pharmacy technicians). The knowledge level of this audience was assessed pre and post masterclass via a self assessed quiz. The lowest score pre- masterclass attendance was 1 and the lowest score post masterclass attendance was 8.

Around 70 people were left on the waiting list unable to attend either the 5 week course or one day masterclass, the MOOC has been developed to meet demand.

At the start of the national programme, in March 2020, NENC had identified 8.6% of patients with FH and this rose to 12.7% by March 2024.

## Benefit

The course, masterclass and MOOC enable HCPs to work towards the NHS LTP target of identifying 25% of people with FH by 2025.

Undertaking education and learning on FH has upskilled HCPs who are better able to support patients. With increased knowledge and skills, they can provide a more thorough consultation so they can care for the patient more effectively.

*“Great helpful course for someone working primary care, now I have a much better understanding of how to spot FH, when to refer and what the patient journey will be like when they are seen”.*

*“The application to practice was very helpful and enables a holistic perspective to be sought so that patient care can be provided accordingly”.*

## Sustainability

As the course was delivered online to people across England and overseas there were emission savings as no transport was involved.

Resources available electronically rather than printed versions.

## Support provided by HI NENC

HI NENC, as the lead organisation for the national programme, approached Northumbria University to design and deliver an FH course which would be open to all across England. HI NENC funded one place per former CCG area. In total 60 places were funded by Health Innovation Network (HIN), formerly AHSN, five of these were from NENC.

The majority of funding came from HIN, with additional funding from NHS Trusts and Primary Care Trust funding, there were also two delegates who self-funded (one from overseas).

HI NENC staff also delivered sessions within the original online 5 week course.

### **Plans for the future / spread and adoption**

Although the 5 week course is still available (at a set time once a week, online), a MOOC has been developed to cope with the additional demand; this will be undertaken in a delegate's own time in a more flexible manner.

There has been some international interest, so commercialisation overseas may be developed going forward. FH is non discriminatory and a problem internationally.

Further research is planned to understand the reach of the training undertaken to date and assess if delegates are currently working with FH patients.

### **Related links, references and further resources**

[Familial Hypercholesterolemia Module | Northumbria University](#)