RINTAG Application Process
- User survey feedback -

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Several changes have been introduced over the past 18 months, to improve the efficacy and transparency of the organ donation and transplantation (ODT) research application and approval process.

In mid-August 2017, an online survey was launched, to seek user feedback about the ODT/ RINTAG application process. The feedback confirmed that the steps taken to introduce improvements have been successful. The areas highlighted for further improvement are in line with the ODT's existing work-plan and priorities for improving the process. The feedback will inform the ongoing lean process.

This paper also seeks RINTAG's advice regarding some specific suggestions that were raised/ prompted because of the survey.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS
RINTAG is asked to note the summary of responses at Annex A and that the survey results will be used to inform the lean process underway for ODT research. The results will also provide a base-line view against which further improvements can be measured.

3. BACKGROUND
The survey was sent to an audience of approximately 180 individuals, including: active and prospective researchers; SNODs research representatives and other key service users. A total of 31 responses were recorded (predominantly from Chief/ Principle/ Co-Investigators and Research Fellows representing the NHS, academia and commercial sector).

4. KEY FINDINGS
A summary of the responses is provided at Annex A for reference. A copy of the full survey response is available upon request.

The survey highlighted the following points:

  i. There seem to be a lack of understanding of RINTAG's aims and objectives. For example, respondents believed that RINTAG's role was to undertake regular systematic evidence reviews and did not understand the role RINTAG has in managing the allocation policy for research organs. More needs to be done to raise awareness of RINTAG's role and remit.
  ii. Respondents believe that the ODT Research Project Team are supportive and helpful, but are less sure of the level of support offered by RINTAG.
  iii. There was some dissatisfaction regarding the length and bureaucracy of the application procedure, although this may reflect the transition period prior to redesigning the application process and forms.

Respondents also raised the following suggestions, which should be considered:

  i. Researchers to be given the opportunity to present proposal to RINTAGs executive team during the application stage, in a 'Dragons Den' format. The research teams for some of the more complex studies are already invited to attend key meetings to present their proposals. Any system that enables all researchers to present would be time consuming and not necessarily deliver any improvements to the current RINTAG decision-making process. However,

it may be helpful to set out criteria for those studies that should be invited to attend RINTAG.

ii. The update reporting system should be changed, with short on-line updates highlighting any key changes every 6 months and the current progress report submitted annually. This would deliver benefits for both researchers and the ODT Research Project Team.

5. NEXT STEPS
The ODT Research Project Team intends to:

i. Continue to promote awareness of RINTAG and its role/ remit, for example through providing information on the ODT website and via the monthly Medical Director's Bulletin, as well as building links with researchers and attending relevant meetings/ conferences.

ii. Review the survey responses as part of the current lean process for the ODT research application system. Lean event members include: Researchers; Quality Assurance; R&D; Statistics; ODT Research Project Management team.

iii. Use the responses as a baseline for measuring service user satisfaction.

6. ACTION REQUIRED
RINTAG is asked to:

i. Advise on the communication strategy: Which conferences/ networking forums within the research and ODT community could be targeted?

ii. Decide if quarterly Dragons Den presentations for prospective researchers should be introduced.

iii. Agree progress reports should be amended to a complete report annually, with an interim update.

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September 2017

Annex A

Summary of RINTAG On-Line Survey Responses: Process

A summary of the responses to the on-line survey regarding RINTAG and ODT Research processes is provided below. It should be noted that there were only 31 respondents in total. The survey also included some 'skip logic', so in some areas the number of respondents was very low.

1 Role of RINTAG
- § Nearly all (88%) of respondents believe the role of RINTAG is to monitor all research relevant to organ donation, retrieval and transplantation. 40% of respondents did not believe that RINTAG had a role in providing advice to researchers. 40% did also not believe that RINTAG had a role in reviewing novel technologies within the field of organ donation and transplantation.

Conclusion: There is a lack of understanding/ awareness regarding the role of RINTAG. This should be addressed and more work to promote RINTAG's role should be undertaken.

2 RINTAGs effectiveness
- § Most respondents (weighted average 3.3[1]) believe RINTAG is effective in supporting and enabling research, innovation and novel technologies.
- § Respondents believe the ODT Research Project Team is effective in supporting those involved in organ donation and transplantation research, (weighted average of 3.8[2]).

Conclusion: This demonstrates that users are largely content with RINTAG's support while more confidence lies with the ODT Research Project Team.

3 Approved studies
- § A total of 10 respondents (37%) confirmed that RINTAG had issued approval to 1 of their currently live studies in the past 12 months.

Conclusion: These studies would have been administered during the transition period of the application process, therefore subjected to major changes.

4 Application process
- § Respondents satisfaction levels for how their application was processed by the ODT Research Project Team were quite low (weighted average of 2.75)[3]. However, 58% of respondents believed that all or some of their studies were processed in a timely manner.

Conclusion: There is a wide gap in applicants' experiences of the application process. Some research applications were administered during the overhaul of the application process. The Research Project Team is working hard at addressing issues. These will be further scrutinised in the lean process.

5 Process Improvements
- § Respondents (n=12) identified several key areas for improvement:
1. Written information provided in advance (i.e. the Research Handbook) - 58%
2. Information on the ODT Clinical Website – 50%
3. The application form: Information about the RINTAG submission and/ or review process; - 42%
4. Advice about operational aspects (i.e. NORS and SNOD implications) – 42%

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[1] Out of 5 categories, where 5 represents *Fully effective*
[2] Ibid.
[3] Out of 5 categories, where 5 represents *Completely satisfied*.

3

Conclusion: While no single-one aspect was identified as significantly more important than other areas, there is room for overall improvement. All items listed will be kept under review. Progress has already been made to address many of these items, including the Research Handbook now available on the website.

6 Progress Reports
- § The most appropriate frequency for progress reporting was considered to be on a 6-monthly basis (40%) or annually (40%).
- § One respondent proposed a shorter mid-year report in addition to a more detailed annual progress report.

Conclusion: The Research Project Team will aim to adopt the mid-year and annual reporting structure, and introduce an online tool for this purpose – pending RINTAGs agreement.

> *"I believe the process has improved, is faster and more transparent. Still, it can be streamlined, for example to allow on-line reporting rather than sending word documents forms."*

7. Hub Research Management
- § A concern was separately raised from the Hub noting that the different type of research proposals are becoming increasingly complex.
- § The complexity and increased bespoke nature of studies adds complications for the Hub management of research projects.

Conclusion: The Hub suggest a working group is set up to look at how the research allocation scheme can be incorporated into the IT Hub development to establish a Research Matching System.