

The EPIC Participant Advisory Panel met at the Assembly House in Norwich on Monday 24th March 2024. There were twelve participants and four researchers in attendance. Four participants sent their apologies for not being able to attend.

Welcomes (All)

The panel welcomed Annalan Navaratnam a public health doctor and PhD student. Nick Wareham joined the meeting on zoom. The panel also welcomed two new members who observed their first EPAP meeting.

Talk- "Our Future Health: What will it achieve that EPIC has not already done" (Nick Wareham)

At the previous EPAP meeting there was a request for a talk about Our Future Health. Nick Wareham joined the meeting to discuss this and try to answer the question of what Our Future Health will achieve that EPIC has not already done.

Our Future Health was established as an idea to help everyone live longer and healthier lives through the discovery and testing of more effective approaches to prevention, earlier detection, and treatment of diseases.

Despite advances in healthcare and medicine, large numbers of people in the UK still spend many years of their later life in poor health because of common diseases and health conditions such as cancer, Alzheimer's, heart disease, arthritis, diabetes and stroke.

Our Future Health has a recruitment target of 5 million participants, with over 80 testing sites. Participants are asked to provide information about their health and lifestyle and a small sample of their blood.

Our Future Health is committed to building a resource that truly reflects the UK population, so that they can identify differences in how diseases begin and progress in people from different backgrounds. So far they have found participants have been demographically weighted towards women and older participants. There is now a strategy to recruit younger and capture a diverse range of social classes.

Participants are asked to provide information about their health and lifestyles and a small sample of their blood. With the data collected, researchers hope that they can develop new ways to detect diseases at an earlier stage, and even prevent them from occurring in the first place.

Nick Wareham explained that he is chair of the Our Future Health Access Committee. Data will never be distributed to researchers, instead they will be able to access data on a Trusted Research Environment.

Although Our Future Health has a larger recruitment target than EPIC-Norfolk, it has collected less detailed information. With a larger cohort, it is much harder to capture scale and detail in data collection.

Talk- "Air Pollution: Improving our understanding of how air pollution exposure leads to heart disease and diabetes" (Annalan Navaratnam)

Annalan Navaratnam is a Public Health Doctor, he is in the process of submitting a PhD research proposal and is keen to get the panels views on his upcoming research proposal. Annalan explained that air pollution is responsible for 4.2 million deaths globally. Evidence suggests that air pollution exposure links to specific health outcomes such as stroke, diabetes and heart disease. Little is understood of the biological processes leading from pollution to disease and current approaches are limited to assessing exposure at residential locations only. Proteomes, proteins expressed by different genes that have been mapped to specific diseases, could be utilised to identify the pathways from pollutant to disease. These coupled with a new dynamic method of assessing exposure, accounting for individual mobility, activity and rates of inhalation, could provide invaluable insight into the relationship between dose and disease. Annalan will use data from three large cohort studies, EPIC-Norfolk, UK Biobank and Fenland Study. Annalan spoke at length about how he intended to carry out his analysis and answered many questions from the panel.

The panel asked why Annalan planned to focus his work on diabetes and heart disease and not wider diseases. Annalan explained that there is much media attention around air pollution and its effect on various diseases, such as ADHD and not just the big killers. Although his research project will focus on diabetes and heart disease, there are other groups that focus on different areas, such as children's cognitive development and its link with air in classrooms.

Annalan was keen to get the panels thoughts on the summary of his PhD proposal. He encouraged the panel to talk with him after the meeting if they had any thoughts or questions on his research proposal as some members had some reservations about his research focus.

Annalan thanked the panel for their constructive feedback and the panel asked Annalan to return with developments/findings on his project.

Review Terms of Reference (ToR)

The panel reviewed the EPAP Terms of Reference and agreed that the roles were already included in the current wording.

AOB

The meeting Chair asked the panel to think of any future topics they would like covered at future EPAP meetings.

Date of next meeting: June 2024