

# Results from R&D Survey of NW Staff 2004

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## Key Findings

- There is a high degree of interest in hearing about and pursuing R&D work amongst Health Protection Agency colleagues in the North West, particularly medical, nursing and scientific staff
- Over half of those interested in pursuing R&D work have projects in mind to do but the remainder have no specific ideas
- Despite interest and ideas, the majority feel that they either do not have or only sometimes have the opportunity to pursue R&D and that R&D is not or is only sometimes part of their job role
- Three quarters of those responding feel confident to initiate an R&D project but less than a quarter are confident of how to access R&D funding
- The most commonly identified themes important in encouraging R&D work are provision of work time and support (for finding funding, personnel for helping with the project, accessing various expertise).
- Other issues mentioned include the difficulties of ethical approval, publishing work, access to library facilities and lack of skills
- There is a high degree of interest amongst colleagues in R&D around disease prevalence and exposures as well as impact of interventions on health and on work practice
- There are good levels of general research skills and experience in the Agency in the NW and competency in teaching

## Background

In November 2003, a Health Protection Agency North West Research and Development Group was initiated, representing colleagues from each section of the agency, with the purpose of:

1. Developing health protection R&D strategy in the Region on behalf of the Regional Management Team
2. Providing a forum for discussion of collaborative possibilities, identifying the scope of R&D work in the region and disseminating R&D achievements and outcomes.
3. Facilitating the identification of resources for R&D in the Region, including available grants, personnel, training and facilities.
4. Coordinating the initiation and audit of R&D activity throughout the Health Protection Agency in the North West.
5. Being a means by which regional issues may be raised nationally and vice versa

During the summer of 2004, a short questionnaire was circulated to Health Protection Agency staff in the Region (not including the laboratory in Manchester) to investigate perceptions of R&D and capacity and enthusiasm for it.

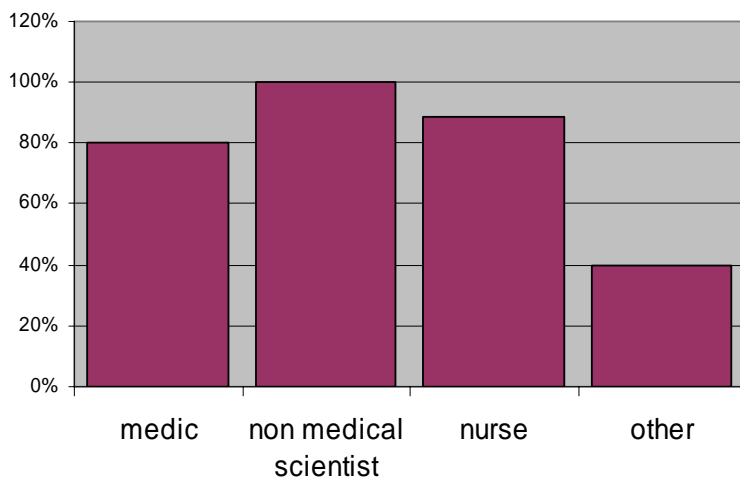
## Returns

38 colleagues completed questionnaires (out of around 80 dispatched) and the majority of these came from HPUs (84%). 39% of the returns were from 'medics', 24% 'nurses', 11% 'non-medical scientists' and 26% 'other' (including IT and admin staff).

## Enthusiasm for R&D

Only 3 responders have no interest in doing R&D, although one of these feels that it might sometimes be part of their job role in an administrative capacity. Almost 80% of responders (30/38) are definitely interested in hearing about R&D progress in the Health Protection Agency and almost three quarters (28/38, 74%) are definitely interested in pursuing R&D work. Just over half of these (16/28, 57%) have projects in mind they would like to do and the remainder have no specific ideas for projects. Interest in R&D is lowest amongst the 'other' category of staff and highest amongst non-medical scientific staff (Figure 1).

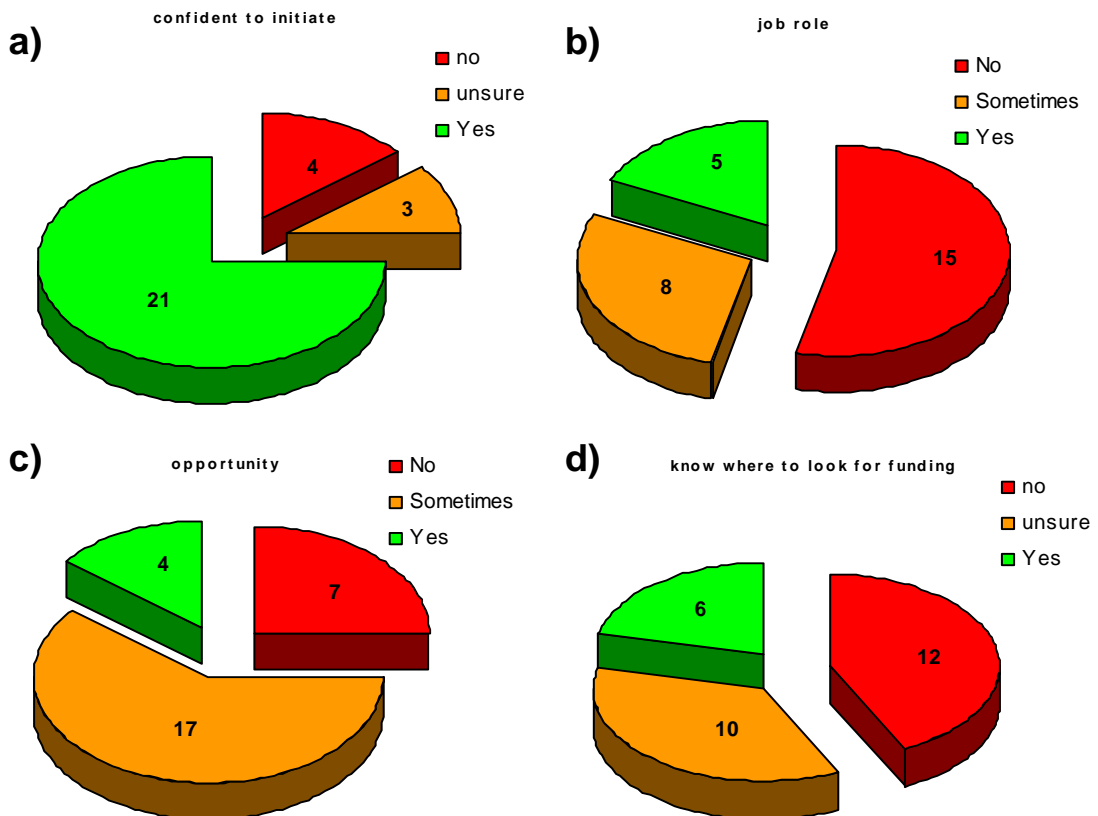
**Figure 1** Proportions of each staff group expressing interest in pursuing R&D work



### Of those definitely interested in pursuing R&D...

Just over 40% (12/28) are already involved in an R&D project. Three quarters are confident to initiate R&D projects, but over half feel it is not part of their job role and less than 15% definitely feel they have the opportunity (Figure 2). Almost 80% are either unsure or do not know where to look for R&D funding (Figure 2).

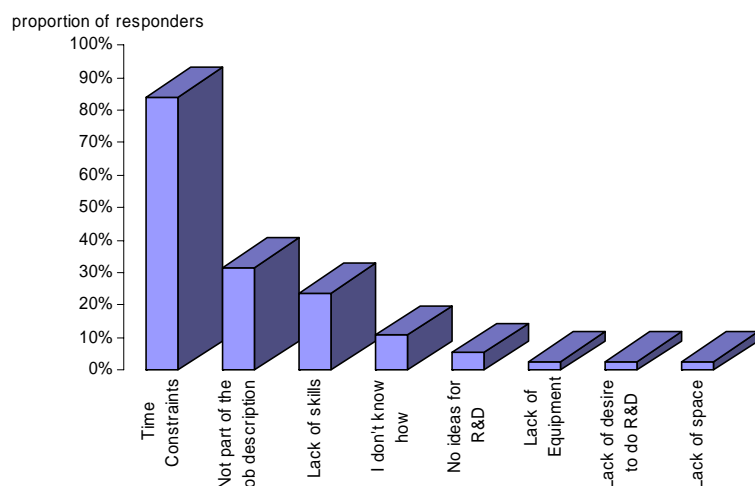
**Figure 2** Responses of those definitely interested in R&D to the questions a) Would you be confident to initiate an R&D project?, b) Is R&D a normal part of your job role?, c) Do you feel you have the opportunity to pursue R&D? and d) Do you know where to look for funding?



### Opportunity to pursue R&D

Almost 80% of the nurses (7/9) but less than half the medics (7/15) consider R&D to be definitely or sometimes a normal part of their job role. The main barriers to R&D work are time constraints (listed for 84% of respondents), R&D not being part of the job description (32%) and lack of skills (24%) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3** Factors that are felt to limit opportunities to pursue R&D, by percentage of responders



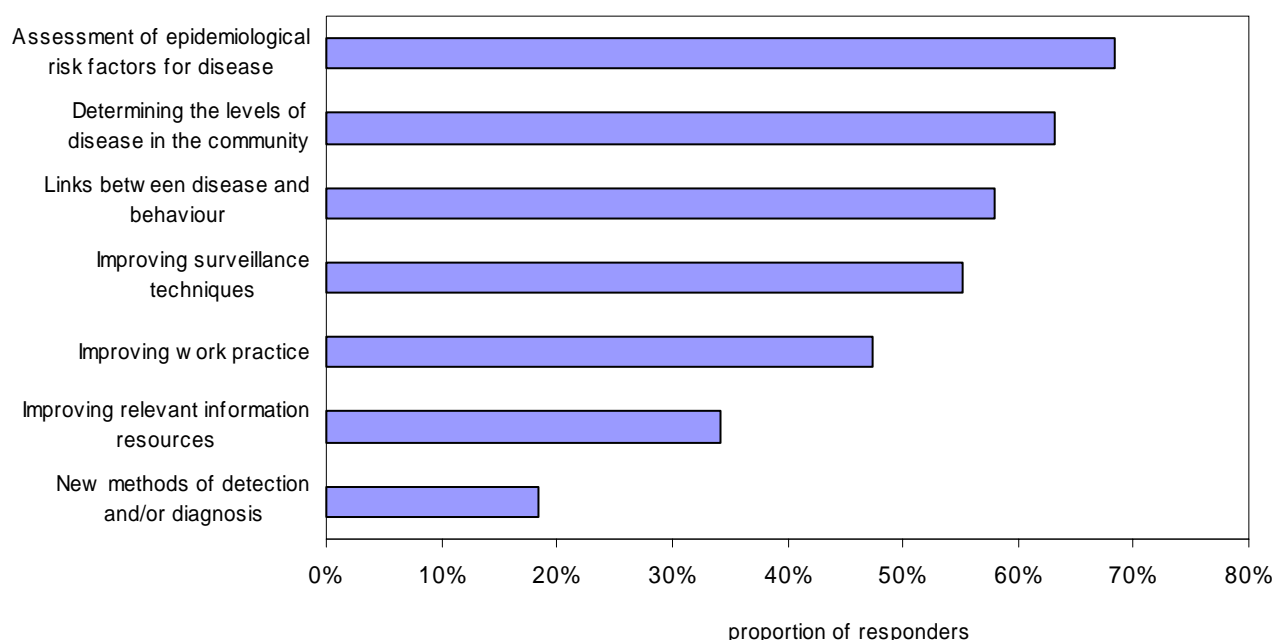
**Other barriers mentioned:** - demands of the process (especially ethical approval, financial support and writing papers), no encouragement, poor access to expert advice, lack of personnel support (eg research assistants), lack of library facilities.

**Needs identified:** - time (protected and in work), support in accessing funding and relevant expertise (including a formal mechanism), scientific and epidemiological support, new skills, important and original project ideas, recognition of effort.

### Areas of R&D of Interest

Information was sought on the interest of colleagues in the North West in specific areas of R&D. The areas of most interest are around disease prevalence and exposures (Figure 4).

**Figure 4** Specified R&D areas of interest for NW colleagues, by percentage of responders



**Other interests mentioned:** - mapping of disease and/or hazards and their exposure, molecular epidemiology, taxonomy, antibiotic resistance, pollution modelling, infection control, impact of training and impact of new policy, relationships between HPA and H.E.I.s, links between immunisation uptake and predictive factors, relationship between health protection system and levels of illness/well being and exposure to hazards, emergency planning, perceptions of risk.

### R&D skills

A high proportion of colleagues (around 80%) have some skill/experience in teaching and literature review. A good proportion (between 60 and 70%) has skill/experience in quantitative, epidemiological and statistical methodology as well as critical appraisal and database management. Around 50% of colleagues have some skill/experience in risk assessment, qualitative methodology, systematic review and project management as well as access to non-Health Protection Agency data that might be of use in R&D.