



**Professional Papers No 5**  
**Research Strategy**

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## Foreword

The British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS) is committed to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and understanding and to the professional conduct of research in ways that are both expert and responsible. In the development of this research strategy BIOS affirms its support of research activity by the profession.

BIOS aims to support research at all levels within the profession, with the aim of increasing our knowledge and understanding of orthoptics and related fields, with the ultimate aim of improving patient outcomes, and the patient experience.

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## **Executive summary**

In this, the second edition of the BIOS Research Strategy, the content reflects the changing face of research alongside clinical practice and the need to produce evidence based care.

There have been many national and regional organisational changes relating to the implementation guidance for the NHS Plan and National Service Frameworks and similar changes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Some of these changes had a direct impact upon research and development activities. Specifically the reconfiguration of regional Research and development structures in England impacted largely on distribution and access to funding. Further reports will impact on research in the future including the UKCRC consultation report on developing research capacity within the nursing and allied health professions.

The increasing emphasis on translational research is acknowledged and welcomed particularly as career and role profiles are being developed at national level for researchers at a clinical level within the NHS.

This strategy highlights research targets for Orthoptists and the supporting documentation that is available from the profession.

### ***Activities and achievements 2005–2008***

The following have been achieved during this time period.

- Appointment of BIOS research lead
- Development of BIOS research mentoring group
- Development of research pages on BIOS web site
- Contribution to the British and Irish Orthoptic Journal
- Raise BIOS research profile at national fora
- Promotion of research career profiles

### ***Future plans 2008 – 2013***

BIOS wishes to develop further areas including:

- Facilitate multi-centre research
- Facilitate individual research exploits

- Utilise to effect the established research mentor group
- Collaborate further with national multi-disciplinary research bodies

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## **Purpose of research**

The purpose of research is to establish new knowledge, attempt to resolve controversy and consolidate advances in a consensual systematic framework. The objectives of research are;

- To deepen and broaden knowledge and understanding by expert responsible and professional means
- To train new researchers in appropriate methods and relevant professional standards of research
- To disseminate research results through publication and teaching
- To secure the exploitation of research results, for the public good and the benefit of professional colleagues

## **Research strategy policy**

It is clear from the above purpose and objectives of research that there are multiple advantages to undertaking research at a variety of levels with impact not only to the individual Orthoptist but to colleagues, patients/users and services.

The British and Irish Orthoptic Society encourages the inclusion of research activity in every department by every Orthoptist so that research becomes the norm rather than an activity only undertaken by a minority. Research can be undertaken at international, national, regional or local level.

The ultimate aim is for every Orthoptist to be actively involved in research. Whilst it is recognised that there are difficulties with clinical career bandings, increased workload and lack of protected time for CPD or research, the onus is on the individual to provide evidence based care for patients. The Health Professions Council requires that all Orthoptists, on re-registration, certify that they are maintaining an up-to-date knowledge base. This requires attention to research ranging from appraising the literature to the involvement in the production of research output.

## **Implementation**

There are key considerations in the partnership between the BIOS and its members. Orthoptists are encouraged to be involved in research and

those undertaking research must have, or be supported by a practitioner who has, the relevant skills and expertise to produce dependable research.

Clear responsibilities must be attached to the roles of all those with an involvement in the research process.

- Orthoptists should appraise controversial information without bias based on research and should apply and evaluate new theories that challenge current practice.
- Orthoptists should contribute to the knowledge that supports and strengthens the profession and share information on a uniprofessional and multiprofessional basis.
- Orthoptists are encouraged to publish and disseminate their findings and are encouraged to use research to provide evidence which informs practice, i.e. evidence based practice.
- Orthoptists are encouraged to monitor the use and efficacy of practice thus contributing to clinical governance.

### **Facilitation**

BIOS will disseminate existing evidence of Orthoptic effectiveness and will facilitate access to the knowledge base of Orthoptists through information resources. BIOS has appointed a Research Lead whose primary role is to facilitate research by providing information at a broad level through to individual contact and support. BIOS will support Orthoptists in applying evidence of effectiveness through the development, dissemination and implementation of evidence based clinical guidelines. BIOS supports Orthoptic managers to use and encourage research to deliver an evidence based service. BIOS encourages specialist interest groups, branches and individuals to identify research priorities for the profession. In addition BIOS encourages inclusion of research in continuing professional development and reflective practice.

### ***Dissemination***

BIOS undertakes to disseminate research findings by ensuring that findings from research are disseminated through appropriate channels.

Dissemination of research results may be targeted directly at Orthoptists through:

- BIOS web pages
- Parallel Vision
- British and Irish Orthoptic Journal (the British and Irish Orthoptic Society liases with the editor of the British and Irish Orthoptic Journal and encourages publications of the highest standards)
- British and Irish Orthoptic Society and branch clinical meetings
- Specialist interest groups
- Annual Scientific Orthoptic Conference
- International Orthoptic Association.

BIOS encourages its members to use the Orthoptic website ([www.orthoptics.org.uk](http://www.orthoptics.org.uk)), Medline (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez>), National Electronic Library for Health ([www.library.nhs.uk/eyes](http://www.library.nhs.uk/eyes)), Orthoptic search facility ([www.liv.ac.uk/orthoptics/research\\_search.htm](http://www.liv.ac.uk/orthoptics/research_search.htm)) and other suitable sites in order to obtain and disseminate research. The BIOS web site research pages contain multiple sources of research support.

### ***Information services***

BIOS has and continues to embrace the research ethic and in recent years has published a number of documents and articles to aid members in their clinical and research practice, e.g. clinical audit guidelines, research document, competency standards and professional practice guidelines and code of ethics and professional conduct. All documents and articles are housed on the BIOS web site.

BIOS facilitates research amongst members by providing information on external research funding (see below). Useful editorials and advice are provided in the British and Irish Orthoptic Journal.

### ***Funding opportunities***

A major obstacle to orthoptists undertaking research is the difficulty in securing funding. BIOS is working for funded, protected time for research through membership of the following bodies;

- Allied Health Professions Research Forum

- Allied Health Professions Clinical Effectiveness Forum
- and through active lobbying of the following bodies;
- Department of Health
  - Higher Education Funding Council for England
  - National Institute for Clinical Excellence
  - Commission for Health Improvement
  - Higher education institutions
  - Healthcare commissioners

BIOS seeks to provide information about sources of funding for research and supports Orthoptists applying for such including;

- Medical Research Council ([www.mrc.ac.uk](http://www.mrc.ac.uk))
- Wellcome Trust ([www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk))
- Health Technology Assessment ([www.hta.nhsweb.nhs.uk](http://www.hta.nhsweb.nhs.uk))
- Higher Education Funding Council for England ([www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk))
- Department of Health ([www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk))
- PPP Healthcare Medical Trust ([www.ppphealthcare.co.uk](http://www.ppphealthcare.co.uk))

### *Ethics*

BIOS recommends the appropriate consideration of ethical approval. All research involving patients, users, care professionals or volunteers, or their data, must receive independent scientific review to ensure it meets with ethical standards. Guidance on ethical approval is available from COREC ([www.corec.org.uk](http://www.corec.org.uk)). All research studies must have appropriate arrangements for obtaining participant consent. Systems must be in place to ensure confidentiality and security of personal information. Risk in the research activity must be assessed, minimised and explained to the relevant ethics committee and subsequently to participants.

### **Barriers to research**

There are a number of factors that can be deemed barriers to research. The main factors include:

- Lack of defined research career pathways
- Limited numbers of Orthoptists with active postdoctoral careers
- Shortages of staff

- Lack of suitable training to enable Orthoptists to undertake research and to critically appraise evidence
- Lack of funding to implement a supportive research infrastructure
- Inequity in the distribution of available funding for clinical research
- Insufficient flexibility between postdoctoral research and clinical training
- Prolonged insecurity of short-term appointments

### **Multi-professional collaboration**

BIOS undertakes to work with members of the professional society and non members including;

- Patients
- Other professionals and allied health professionals
- Higher education institutions
- NHS Trusts
- Funding bodies
- Government
- Healthcare commissioners

### ***Higher Education Institutions***

Key considerations in partnership with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) include ensuring graduates have received training in research principles. It is important to ensure that lecturers are encouraged in their research roles with a positive impact in the contribution to the undergraduate teaching and to the profession. In addition members must be encouraged to undertake research as part of achieving higher degrees.

### ***Research career profiles***

Following Agenda for Change there has been a recognition of the lack of role profiles for research clinicians. In collaboration with the AHP research forum, BIOS has worked on such role profiles ranging from band 5 to band 8c. It is hoped that these will aid the establishment of research practice for clinicians interested in this avenue of career progression.

## **BIOS Research Achievements for 2005 – 2008**

Following the publication of research initiatives for 2005–2008, the following have been achieved during this time period.

- Appointment of BIOS research lead
- Development of BIOS research mentoring group
- Development of research pages on BIOS web site
- Contribution to the British and Irish Orthoptic Journal
- Raised BIOS research profile at national fora
- Promotion of research career profiles

## **5–Year plan: BIOS Research Initiatives for 2008 – 2013**

Following on from the achievements from the first 3 years covered by the first BIOS research strategy, BIOS wishes to develop further areas including:

- Facilitate multi–centre research
- Facilitate individual research exploits
- Utilise to effect the established research mentor group
- Collaborate further with national multi–disciplinary research bodies
- Establish a database of research achievements by Orthoptists

## **Research potential**

BIOS is committed to facilitate and support research in the following areas that are deemed to have substantial research potential due to gaps in evidence base.

### **Epidemiology**

- Information on prevalence and incidence of Orthoptic and related conditions

### **Clinical investigation**

- Vision assessment
- Orthoptic assessment methods, e.g. methods of visual acuity assessment
- Assessment of everyday task performance

- Amblyopia; causes and effects
- Efficacy of vision screening

#### Clinical therapeutic

- Visual impairment
- Rehabilitation process
- Amblyopia therapy
- Nystagmus therapy
- Orthoptic treatment, e.g. role of conservative treatment for strabismus
- Patient compliance with and experience of orthoptic interventions
- Timing of surgical interventions

#### Experimental

- Scientific research for investigation, management, mechanisms and theory

#### Health care provision

- Health service delivery
- New ways of working, e.g. shared care, extended role
- The role of the orthoptist in the ophthalmic team

## Research involvement

Level

BIOS support

### ***General awareness***

- Awareness of the research literature
- Keeping up to date
- Consideration of effectiveness of practice
- Use of clinical guidelines
- British Orthoptic Journal
- Current awareness abstracts in Parallel Vision
- Regular BIOS Clinical Courses and meetings, and Annual Scientific Conference
- BIOS Competency Standards and Clinical Practice Guidelines
- BIOS returners courses
- BIOS mentoring scheme
- BIOS CPD portfolio
- BIOS special interest groups

### ***Active use of research evidence***

- Literature search skills
- Skills in evaluation of evidence
- Active use of evidence-based medicine
- Development of local clinical guidelines
- BIOS courses on evidence-based medicine
- Links from BIOS website to relevant databases

### ***Audit involvement***

- Regular involvement in departmental audit
- BIOS audit document

### ***Basic research involvement***

- Involvement in local research projects
- Participation in national research projects
- BIOS research document

### ***Advanced research involvement***

- Part of a team undertaking major research
- BIOS information on research

- projects funding
- Primary researcher/fundholder

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

Further details on Orthoptics as a profession and the professional body, the British and Irish Orthoptic Society, may be obtained from the professional web-site; [www.orthoptics.org.uk](http://www.orthoptics.org.uk)

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