



ARC East of England Fighting fatigue in the NHS ambulance sector

Using sleep science to address the fatigue experienced by the ambulance workforce

Fatigue can lead to a number of issues, impairing an individual's ability to perform tasks and affecting their health. Poor sleep and fatigue are common among acute and emergency health care staff. We have previously worked with the East of England Ambulance Service, which recognised sleep health as an area of concern. It is important to understand the scale of this problem so the ambulance sector remains safe for the

workforce and patients. Developing and implementing a fatigue risk management system (FRMS) can enhance patient and staff outcomes, similar to practices in safety-critical industries such as aviation and transport.

What is the aim of the project?

The CATNAPS project aims to develop a fatigue risk management system for the

NHS ambulance sector that tackles fatigue and promotes better sleep health, which is feasible and likely to improve patient outcomes and staff wellbeing.

What are we doing?

There are four phases to this study, including finding out how other sectors manage fatigue, interviewing the ambulance workforce and patients about the different ways of managing fatigue, observing frontline staff to understand their lived experience of long shifts, and providing design guidance. We are in the third phase and have interviewed 48 staff and patients.

How are we involving people?

Patient and public representatives have guided this project, focusing on improving ambulance services by better managing fatigue and considering how patients and the public would perceive the changes. Our patient co-investigator, Mr. Jeremy Dearling, is a full member of the research team and has contributed significantly to the project.

What is the impact so far?

The FRMS has been developed by the ambulance sector for ambulance service staff. We will support ambulance services in incorporating the FRMS guidance to ensure its suitability for use across the UK. We hope this will improve staff and patient safety.

What next?

We have started the observational ethnography part of the study to get a first-hand view of life on the frontlines of ambulance services, including ambulance crews and call handlers. You can learn more about this project in our podcast, led by Jeremy Dearling.

For more information about this project

Scan the QR code or contact the Principal investigator, Professor Kristy Sanderson (kristy.sanderson@uea.ac.uk).



What is NIHR ARC East of England?

The National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration (NIHR ARC) East of England is one of the 15 NIHR ARCs. We collaborate with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust and the Universities of Cambridge, East Anglia, Hertfordshire and Essex, along with other NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, Integrated Care Systems, patient-led organisations, charities, and industry partners.

Get in contact with NIHR ARC East of England

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