



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Better evidence needed to demonstrate the health and wealth benefits derived from medical research**

Funders of medical research should develop better evidence to demonstrate the range of societal benefits that result from the investment in medical research – according to a report '*Medical research: assessing the benefits to society*' published today by the UK Evaluation Forum.

The UK Evaluation Forum, an initiative supported by the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust, calls for the development of improved methods to capture and evaluate the impact of medical research on national health and prosperity.

Professor Martin Roland FMedSci, who chaired the report's working group, said "Government data testify to the excellence and efficiency of UK medical research, but despite significant activity in quantifying research outputs in terms of papers, citations and patents etc., there are few examples where the broader impact of medical research on health and wealth generation have been assessed."

Professor Roland continued, "Studies from the United States suggest that the investment in, for example, cardiovascular and stroke research is worth more than \$1.5 trillion per year to the US economy: 20 times greater than the annual spend on such research. It is now time to consider how such an economic analysis might be applied to the UK."

The report welcomes continuing efforts by UK research funders to develop evaluation methods and calls for improved use of existing evaluation tools and sharing of good practice, including greater consistency in data collection and analysis across organisations.

However, the report warns against relying too heavily on metrics-based approaches and imposing evaluation methods that might stifle innovation.

Professor Roland continued, "There is seduction in numbers and the UK should avoid becoming too wedded to quantitative indicators. It is extremely difficult to identify the impacts of medical research in what is usually a complex, slow and incremental process to eventual health benefits.

"Ultimately, there is no one 'best' method for evaluating research. Rather, a range of both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be used."

Sir Keith Peters, President of the Academy of Medical Sciences, emphasised the report's recommendation for research funders to work together in developing an evidence base for demonstrating the impact of medical research.

Sir Keith said, "Funders should consider how the information generated by evaluation can be used to engage policy makers and the public about the achievements, applications and broader societal implications of medical research."

Professor Colin Blakemore, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council, said "Funders of medical research have a good story to tell and we need to find ways of documenting the value of our work to make the case for funding of medical research as persuasive as possible."

Dr Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust, said "A research funder's work does not end with the award of a grant. What matters is what is done with the grant - what has been discovered, who has been trained and how have the results been communicated. We need better methods of evaluating the outcomes of grants, so that we can justify the choices we make and demonstrate that our funding is making a difference."

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### Notes for Editors

1. The report is available to download from [www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk), [www.mrc.ac.uk](http://www.mrc.ac.uk) and [www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk).
2. For further information, please contact Helen Munn (email [helen.munn@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:helen.munn@acmedsci.ac.uk), telephone 0207 969 5234).
3. The independent Academy of Medical Sciences promotes advances in medical science and campaigns to ensure these are translated as quickly as possible into benefits for patients. The Academy's eight hundred Fellows are the United Kingdom's leading medical scientists from hospitals, academia, industry and the public service. Website at: [www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk)
4. The Medical Research Council (MRC) is a national organisation funded by the UK tax-payer. Its business is medical research aimed at improving human health; everyone stands to benefit from the outputs. The research it supports and the scientists it trains meet the needs of the health services, the pharmaceutical and other health-related industries and the academic world. MRC has funded work which has led to some of the most significant discoveries and achievements in medicine in the UK. About half of the MRC's expenditure of £450 million is invested in its 40 Institutes, Units and Centres. The remaining half goes in the form of grant support and training awards to individuals and teams in universities and medical schools. Website at: [www.mrc.ac.uk](http://www.mrc.ac.uk).
5. The Wellcome Trust is the most diverse biomedical research charity in the world, spending about £450 million every year both in the UK and internationally to support and promote research that will improve the health of humans and animals. The Trust was established under the will of Sir Henry Wellcome, and is funded from a private endowment, which is managed with long-term stability and growth in mind. Website at: [www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk).