



## PRIMARY CARE

### NRS Primary Care

### GP Practices Taking Part in Research: Information Leaflet for Patients

#### GP Practices Taking Part in Research

**GP practices sometimes agree to participate in high quality, ethically and NHS approved research studies that they feel may be of benefit to their patients or may help improve health services and treatments.**

In order to take part in these studies, practices need some help from specially trained NHS contracted support staff. In Scotland, research is often supported by the NHS Research Scotland (NRS) Primary Care Network.

The Network is funded by the Scottish Government and these funds are partially used to pay for specially trained staff that have NHS contracts and support research across Scotland. **Having an NHS contract means that legally, they must follow the same rules on confidentiality as GP practice staff**, and can be integrated into the practice team in order to help them identify people who may be interested in the research.

In some cases, where large numbers of patients have to be sent information, a secure NHS facility called a "Safe Haven" or a secure NHS approved mailing service, such as "DOCMAIL", may also be used.

#### How are people chosen to be invited?

**When a GP practice agrees to take part in a research study, NRS Primary Care Network/ NHS contracted staff search the GP practice computer records to find patients who might be interested in the study.**

The list of patients is then left with the GP practice to approve.

Once this is approved, Network/NHS contracted staff will either send out invitation letters for the GP practice on their behalf or, for large studies, a "Safe Haven" or NHS approved mailing service may be used.

At all times confidentiality and security of patient data is given the highest priority. Practices look at each study individually before agreeing to take part *only* in those studies that they feel are of the highest quality and may be of potential benefit to their patients, either now or in the future.

#### Safe Havens

**A Safe Haven is an NHS facility (usually managed by a University) which operates under the strictest controls and security as with any building or computerised system that involves the movement and storage of NHS/health related records.**

To be a "Safe Haven" it must meet many criteria and the staff who work there, must work under the same rules on confidentiality and data protection as would a doctor or a nurse.

Once the search has been run in the GP practice this is passed to the practice for approval. A computer file containing only enough details for those patients to be contacted is sent by secure NHS email to the secure NHS email address in the safe haven where it is used to print addressed letters for research invitation packs. Safe havens use automatic print, fold/ insert software and equipment to put the addressed invitation letters and study materials in envelopes ready for posting. At no time do any medical details leave the practice. Using a Safe Haven is simply a way to enable mail to be sent to a large number of patients in a secure way.

## NHS Approved Mailing Service

When we send large mailouts we sometimes use a business outside the NHS that has been NHS approved (for example, DOCMAIL) and follows the same rules on confidentiality and data security as a Safe Haven (see over leaf).

Within the UK, these companies have been approved by the NHS to carry out large scale mail -outs for NHS organisations (such as GP practices- many of whom already use this service) in the same way a Safe Haven may be used for this purpose.

## How we invite people to take part

