

A Statement from the Global Coordination, Federation and Support of Platform Trials in Acute Care Research Workshop co-led by the InFACT, ISARIC and ICC-CTN networks

On the 16th and 17th of September 2024, representatives from large platform trials in acute care, research teams associated with investigator-led clinical trials groups and networks globally, public patient representatives and funders met in Dublin, Ireland to discuss the principles, needs and future of platform trials and their operation, coordination, collaboration, governance and funding in acute care research.

In contrast to a conventional randomized clinical trial that evaluates a single treatment, a platform trial studies a population of patients with a disease using a common protocol and statistical model which enables the assessment of multiple therapies simultaneously and sequentially, more accurately considered a platform upon which multiple individual trials can be run. Platform trials were first introduced in oncology, and the model proliferated in acute care during the COVID-19 pandemic providing the rapid assessment of interventions. As the sense of urgency wanes post COVID-19, the appeal of the platform trial endures – as a mechanism both to meet the research challenges of the next public health crisis and to integrate research into clinical practice to address the myriad questions inherent in providing clinical care. The model creates new opportunities, but also new challenges for trialists, research teams, patients and public, funders, and policy-makers. It is timely and appropriate to enumerate and address these, building on discussions started in Toronto, 2023 at the InFACT/ISARIC/Unity Health Colloquium on the Lessons of COVID-19 for Clinical Research.

The **VISION** of our collaboration (aspirational, defining a direction for our efforts):

A world where patient outcomes are continuously improved through global research collaboration within a learning health system.

Our **MISSION** (defines purpose and actionable objectives):

To build a collaborative, equitable and efficient global research ecosystem based on maximizing innovation amongst federated platform and other clinical trials in acute care and health emergencies.

Six working groups were created to facilitate this vision and mission with focussed outputs to guide existing and new platform trials and their collaboration including; Key Components and Taxonomy, Data and Outcomes, Governance, Patient Public partners, Knowledge users and Capacity-Building, Operationalisation, Design, Sustainability and Communications.

This group believes that:

- Research plays a pivotal role in the provision and advancement of healthcare. Research should be embedded and funded within the healthcare system.
- We can successfully collaborate across platform trials, share resources, data and knowledge to answer questions of clinical care more rapidly and efficiently for patients, clinicians and the public, where appropriate, and particularly during public

health threats such as pandemics. We need to communicate to funders, policymakers and regulatory/ethics committees the potential gains of creating such a framework so that shared processes, Core Outcome sets (COS) and shared datasets are established to facilitate and provide this opportunity.

- Research needs to be equitable with increased capacity-building and conduct in low resourced settings with the highest disease burden.
- The patients and public voice should be embedded within the research process.
- The value of platform trials versus conventional trials needs to be communicated and recognised with sustainable funding mechanisms applied.
- Mechanisms need to be established for early career researcher development.
- The importance of multi-disciplinary collaboration between clinicians, allied health practitioners, researchers, academics, scientists, as well as with funders, policymakers and patients and the public.

We issue a call to action for trialists, research teams, networks and trial groups, patient and public representatives, clinicians, allied health, and funders to work together in a collaborative approach. By improving the efficiency and sustainability of platform trials, particularly in terms of funding, operationalisation, and translation of outcomes, we aim to revolutionise the way clinical trials are conducted. This unified and embedded learning healthcare approach will transform clinical care globally and ensure that research continually contributes to the betterment of patient outcomes in the face of future public health challenges.