

Assembling the Data Jigsaw in Salford: improving MSK research to advance patient care and inform patient policy using linked data

Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust is working with the University of Manchester on a research project to improve healthcare for people with musculoskeletal conditions (problems with joints, bones and muscles) including arthritis.

The project aims to:

1. Accurately estimate how many people in Salford have a musculoskeletal condition. This information can help people who provide health care in Salford to understand the needs of people in Salford.
2. Develop a set of instructions (an algorithm) for predicting which patients may develop a condition called axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA), a chronic inflammatory disease. This is a first step toward producing an algorithm that could help clinicians to diagnose axSpA in less time, meaning faster access to support and treatments for patients

To do this work, GP records and hospital records will need to be linked together for each individual patient during the project.

How does this affect me?

If you are **over 18** and are **registered with a GP in Salford**, your data **from 2010 onwards** may be included. This means that staff working at Northern Care Alliance Foundation Trust may take some data from your GP record and your hospital record (if you have one), and store it together with other patients' data for this research. Any information that could identify you such as your name or date of birth will be removed, and your data will be marked using a random number. To find out more about how your privacy is protected, contact business.intelligence@nca.nhs.uk

The data will be stored on the hospital computer network. Staff working on the project at NCA and researchers will be given a log-in and password to allow them to work with this data. All of these people will have completed training in how to protect the privacy of patients by keeping data secure. The project has been reviewed by the Confidentiality Advisory Group, who check to make sure that the research will benefit patients and that the privacy of patients is protected as much as possible.

I don't want my data to be used, can I opt out?

If you have already opted out of having your medical records used for research, you don't need to do anything. If you have not already opted out, but you would prefer that your data is not used for this project, you can email business.intelligence@nca.nhs.uk. You can also write to Business Intelligence Research, 631 Eccles New Road, Salford, M50 1SY, or call 0161 206 4250 and ask for first line support.

Please include your name and NHS number (if you don't have your NHS number you can find it using this service [Find your NHS number - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) so that NCA staff can make sure that your patient data is not included.

If you are interested in the results of this study, you can find updates at
<https://tinyurl.com/Assembling-the-Data-Jigsaw>