

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**The Ethical Management of Medical Imaging in Research**

Medical imaging, mostly with magnetic resonance (MR), is used increasingly in research involving normal, healthy volunteers, as well as patients. This has highlighted the problem of the unintended, chance discovery of *incidental findings*, unforeseen findings which might have health implications for those volunteers. The ethical and legal issues around such findings will be discussed at a one day symposium, *Ethical Management of Research Imaging*, organised jointly by The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) and Scottish Imaging Network: A Platform for Scientific Excellence (SINAPSE), and held in London today, Thursday 1 July 2010, at the Wellcome Trust, the primary funders of the meeting.

Currently there is little consensus in the UK, or elsewhere, as to how the consequences of the use of imaging in research should be handled, and such consequences are not addressed explicitly in guidelines. This has led to recent academic and popular press editorials highlighting the need for better management.

The symposium aims to address these issues by engaging all UK stakeholders, including research imaging centres and professional organisations whose members use imaging in research, to summarise current opinions and identify practical issues in the ethical and legal management of research imaging. The proposed outcome of the symposium is the establishment of a consensual, practical, lawful and ethically defensible UK guideline on the management of incidental findings in research imaging.

Professor Joanna Wardlaw, Director of SINAPSE, said, ““Current practice for dealing with incidental findings in research participants in the UK varies widely, yet three to four percent of research volunteers may have an unexpected abnormality, which can be very distressing. The fact that many UK researchers are not happy with the situation is demonstrated by the truly excellent response to this meeting from research imaging centres, professional bodies, ethics, funding and governmental organisations. We hope that by bringing this large group of representatives together, we can develop sensible and transparent guidance for the management of incidental findings, thereby improving research practice in the UK.”

Dr Tony Nicholson, Dean of the Faculty of Clinical Radiology, said, “This important symposium, and subsequent report, will hopefully lead to a clear framework for the ethical management of research imaging in the UK. This meeting is a key example of the RCR’s commitment to promoting and supporting research, and the pursuance of academic careers in radiology”.

## Notes to Editors

1. The **Ethical Management of Research Imaging Symposium** takes place at the Wellcome Trust, 215 Euston Road, London, on Thursday 1 July 2010.

2. For more information, please contact Dan Garbutt, Communications Officer for the RCR, 020 7299 1138 (direct line) or [dan\\_garbutt@rcr.ac.uk](mailto:dan_garbutt@rcr.ac.uk), [www.rcr.ac.uk](http://www.rcr.ac.uk)

3. The **Royal College of Radiologists (RCR)** has approximately 8000 members and Fellows worldwide representing the disciplines of clinical oncology and clinical radiology. All members and Fellows of the College are registered medical or dental practitioners. The RCR exists to advance the science and practice of clinical radiology and clinical oncology through a range of activities, including setting and maintaining the standards for entry to, and practise in, the specialties of clinical radiology and clinical oncology, and arrangements for continuing professional development (CPD) in both specialties.

4. **SINAPSE** is a consortium of six Scottish universities. It has been established with funding from the Scottish Funding Council, the Chief Scientist Office and the six Universities. The main research focus is on imaging the brain, with additional interests in oncology and cardiovascular imaging. The technology focus is primarily on magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), positron emission tomography (PET), single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), and electrophysiology (EEG). The network funding has increased the number of key research staff and students within Scotland and it allows the sharing of skills and education via e-learning, seminars and other key events.

5. **The Wellcome Trust** is a global charity dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. It supports the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. The Trust's breadth of support includes public engagement, education and the application of research to improve health. It is independent of both political and commercial interests.