



EILEEN MORROW

Role: Doctoral Clinical Academic Fellow

Institution: University of Oxford

RESEARCH STORY

My first realisation that I was interested in research was when I was completing my undergraduate thesis at the University of Strathclyde. I really enjoyed the process of answering a clinical question, and learning about research methods.

However, I really struggled with how to become more involved in research in my early career. I felt that many of my AHP colleagues were involved in research through their position in a department, however as we worked across multiple departments I felt I struggled find opportunities.

Eventually, I spoke to a paediatric orthopaedic consultant that I worked with who coincidentally had recently run a James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership, Tim Theologis. He was keen to support students to answer the research questions and encouraged me to apply for a doctoral fellowship. Tim supporting me to undertake research has been transformational for my career, and I cannot thank him enough for his guidance and sharing his expertise.

However, it took me several years and multiple rejections to finally receive a doctoral fellowship. I had three unsuccessful applications, each of which was difficult to comprehend and stay motivated through. My main learning from these was that you need to show a commitment to a career in research before you can be considered for a doctoral fellowship.

To demonstrate this commitment, I instead applied for an NIHR Pre-Doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship, which I was delighted to be awarded. It was an amazing training opportunity which I used to complete an MSc in Health Research Methods at the University of Exeter. I would strongly recommend a pre-doctoral fellowship before undertaking a PhD. I was surprised to find out I could do this on the same salary, particularly as I had just bought a house when I was looking to apply.

I was eventually awarded an NIHR Doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship and I was delighted to start a DPhil in Musculoskeletal Sciences in September 2023. I am very much enjoying my DPhil, and am excited to see how my research project develops.

My journey into research has been a struggle at points, but my enjoyment of each opportunity I have received has far outweighed this. I am proud to represent prosthetists and orthotists in the research community and am committed to helping others become involved in research.

RESEARCH TIPS

- Seek out a mentor. It is really important to have an established researcher to support you and identify opportunities for you.
- Look for funding opportunities at every level. It can sometimes feel like all the funding is for completing a PhD, but there is a lot of funding available for early research skills including internships and pre-doctoral fellowships.
- Stay resilient. Rejection is a natural part of research, and can often feel unfair. Being resilient to rejection is key to a career as a researcher.

