

## **Editorial – Nursing in Critical Care**

### **What's the big IDEA? A novel framework to strategically build an integrated clinical academic career**

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It is unequivocal that health research is fundamental to improving patient outcomes, addressing health inequities, and achieving universal, high quality, safe and efficient healthcare (World Health Organization, 2013, Bennett et al., 2020). To ensure this research base has maximum utility and translational impact, it is imperative that all members of the multidisciplinary healthcare workforce, including nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals (NMAHP), lead, undertake and deliver research (NHS England and Improvement, 2021, Health Education England, 2022). However, developing a career that transcends clinical practice and research (clinical-academic) can often involve an undulating journey. Whilst over the past 20 years there has been much focus on building infrastructure to support NMAHP clinical academics (Westwood et al., 2018, Currey et al., 2011, Carrick-Sen et al., 2019), navigating this often-unchartered territory can be uncertain for many (van Oostveen et al., 2017, Trusson et al., 2021).

From my own insights in developing a clinical academic career, as well as supporting and observing that of many others, it is evident that NMAHP clinical academics: (1) embark on their journeys at different starting points; (2) their aspirations and goals (or end points) may be different; (3) they work in different services/organisations which vary in support, ambition, and expectation; and (4) they have different skills, profiles and strengths. It is therefore evident that no two clinical academics are the same. This poses an issue when attempting to strategically develop careers.

In this editorial I propose a novel approach to strategically building a clinical academic career through the 'IDEAs Framework'. As shown in Table 1, this framework incorporates four key domains: *Influencers*; *Drivers*; *Enablers*; and *Ambitions* as a way of framing and organising a clinical academic's thinking, actions and strategic direction. Each domain will be presented in turn with the aim of enabling the reader to apply the framework to their career, irrespective of where they are at in their clinical academic career.

### **I is for.... Influencers**

It may be cliché, but no person is an island. This is the same for NMAHP clinical academics. Whilst for many NMAHP clinical academics they are trailblazing and treading uncharted territory which may feel an extremely isolating endeavour (Avery et al., 2022), the sustained success of their career is reliant on influencers. Influencers can be defined as a person or group that can influence the behaviour or opinions of others. In the context of clinical academics, influencers can include a myriad of individuals, committees, and organisations (Cowley et al., 2020). Using their leadership, expertise, and authority, influencers can affect the clinical academic agenda for an individual, a service, a professional group, or a community across the clinical and academic domains.

### **D is for.... Drivers**

Drivers can be defined as the conditions that enables something or someone to become and remain successful. Therefore, due to the nature and complexity of NMAHP clinical academic careers, drivers will transcend systems. From the micro (the patient and families, services or departments), through to the meso (organisational), and then the macro (integrated health system, national policy makers and funders, professional organisations) drivers set the priorities for research, clinical service provision, patient care, and professional development (Trusson et al., 2019). It is essential that the clinical-academic NMAHP is cognisant of these often-evolving drivers to ensure their activity and impact is aligned and maximised.

### **E is for.... Enablers**

An enabler is defined as something or someone that makes something happen. A clinical-academic NMAHP is their biggest enabler. Conducting oneself with integrity and purpose, communicating effectively, and bringing people and the teams around them on their journey can enable clinical-academic career success. However, the phrase 'it takes a village to raise a child' also applies to a clinical academic. Many of the identified influencers will also be

enablers. These include but are not limited to: mentors; line managers; supervisors; professional leads; and research directors (Avery et al., 2022). However, the range of enablers can also be broader including the team and networks that relate to both clinical and research activities. Furthermore, enablers include local, organisational, or national strategies/policies which commit to the development of a specific research area, a clinical service development, or clinical academic careers generally. Funding is a key enabler for clinical academics, but the route to securing funding can be challenging. Therefore, other enablers on the road to funding success includes research and innovation departments; research design services; research groups; and national/international collaborators/collaborations.

### **A is for.... Ambitions**

Elucidating the ambition of the clinical academic NMAHP is central to providing clarity and strategic direction for their career. Whilst absolute lucidity may never be achieved, being clear about purpose and how the planned activity will help you to achieve this, is crucial. For example, ambitions may include: to have demonstrable impact on the outcomes of a patient group or population; to develop research leadership expertise in a field; or to develop others to generate the science to inform clinical care. Whatever the ambition(s) is/are it is important to be clear what they are and how these align to influencers, drivers and the enablers. Furthermore, it is essential to be able to effectively communicate these to a range of stakeholders (van Oostveen et al., 2017) to make the invisible visible, but to also inspire others with your mission and vision.

### **Conclusion**

The 'IDEAs framework' provides a novel way for clinical academics to organise and appraise their status to strategically develop themselves and careers. Whether just embarking on your clinical academic career or having progressed further along the pathway, the 'IDEAs framework' offers opportunity to illuminate and reflect on the often complex or hidden

aspects to career success and affords areas that are less well developed to be identified and focused upon.

**Table 1: The IDEAS Framework domains, prompts and examples**

Domain	Prompts/questions	Examples
<b>Influencers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is supporting your vision/mission?</li> <li>• Whose agendas align to your career ambitions?</li> <li>• What table do I need to be around?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People, committees, organisations</li> <li>• Clinical, academics, professional organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Drivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is important to my patients and their families?</li> <li>• What are the priorities for my department or service?</li> <li>• Where does my role, research and career sit in the bigger picture?</li> <li>• What are the priorities of tomorrow?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro drivers: patients and their families; services and departments</li> <li>• Meso drivers: organisational</li> <li>• Macro drivers: integrated health system; national funders/policy; professional organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I know where I am going?</li> <li>• Do I know what I need to get there?</li> <li>• How can I articulate my plans clearly?</li> <li>• How can I bring people, teams, others with me on my journey?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You</li> <li>• Your team and colleagues</li> <li>• Mentors/supervisors; line managers; professional leads; research directors</li> <li>• Funders</li> <li>• Career pathways</li> <li>• Research and innovation departments; research design service; Research groups; National collaborations.</li> <li>• Local and national strategy and policy</li> </ul>
<b>Ambition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you want to achieve in this step?</li> <li>• What is your ultimate aim?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact</li> <li>• Career goals</li> <li>• Team/service</li> <li>• Skill and knowledge development</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How will this help you get to where you need to be?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building capacity and capability</li></ul>
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