



RESEARCH NEWS

Endometriosis research should aim to improve diagnosis and halt progression, meeting hears

Susan Mayor

London

Improving the diagnosis of endometriosis and stopping its progression are key research priorities for the condition, agreed patients and health professionals responding to a survey published in the *Lancet* and presented at the World Congress on Endometriosis on 19 May.¹

Endometriosis is common, affecting around one in 10 women during their reproductive years and having a similar prevalence to diabetes. But research into this chronic and painful condition is currently underfunded when compared with other common diseases.

The Endometriosis Priority Setting Partnership, set up by the University of Edinburgh and overseen by the James Lind Alliance—a non-profit initiative funded by the National Institute for Health Research—aims to identify the top research priorities in endometriosis.

The partnership gathered research questions from women with endometriosis, as well as healthcare professionals, researchers, and organisations working in the field, and reviewed guidelines and systematic reviews.

It carried out an online survey that drew 4767 research questions from 1225 respondents from the UK and Ireland (70% patients with current or previous endometriosis; 20% healthcare professionals). A further 111 questions were identified from literature searches. The partnership identified a total of 72 research questions after merging similar ones and removing those that had already been studied in systematic reviews.

A total of 1418 people then ranked the 72 research questions in order of importance, and the top priorities for endometriosis research were agreed at a workshop. They were:

- Improving the diagnosis of endometriosis
- Finding the most effective way of stopping endometriosis progressing
- Investigating whether a cure can be developed
- Exploring what causes endometriosis, and
- Identifying the most effective ways of educating health professionals, to reduce the time to diagnosis and improve treatment and care.

Further priorities included investigating whether it is possible to develop a non-invasive screening tool to help diagnose endometriosis; looking at the best ways to maximise fertility in women with endometriosis; and finding the most effective way of managing the emotional and psychological impact of the condition and the fatigue it causes.

The partnership also recommended research into the outcomes of surgical and medical treatments and the most effective non-surgical approaches to manage endometriosis pain and other symptoms.

“This important project will raise awareness of endometriosis and drive investment into research that matters most to women living with this debilitating condition,” said Andrew Horne, professor of gynaecology and reproductive sciences at the MRC Centre for Reproductive Health at the University of Edinburgh, who led the initiative.

He explained that the priorities identified would provide a platform for researchers, funding bodies, and drug companies to guide decisions on future research funding and programmes in endometriosis.



¹ Horne AW, Saunders PTK, Abokhras IM, et al. Top ten endometriosis research priorities in the UK and Ireland. *Lancet* 2017. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31344-2.

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