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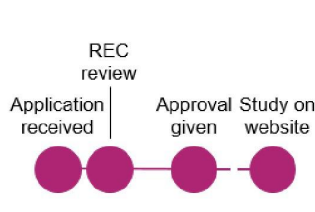
## Fast-track review service helps COVID-19 research deliver results quickly

Last updated on 25 Jun 2020

In the week that researchers on the RECOVERY trial have made public the results about the effect of dexamethasone on coronavirus survival rates, we reflect on how our COVID-19 fast-track review process is helping UK researchers get their research up and running quickly, producing valuable insights for the prevention and treatment of the disease.

Since the HRA opened its fast-track research review service to COVID-19 researchers in early March, we have reviewed more than 300 applications and we've done so in record time. Studies identified by the Chief Medical Officer for England as urgent have made up around 10% of those applications – and we have reviewed them in less than 24 hours. A further 60% of applications – which aim to develop vaccines, treatments or diagnostics or aim to understand immune response or disease prevalence – have been reviewed in less than 72 hours. The remaining 30% of COVID-19 research applications have been reviewed within a week with full approval following shortly after.

The fast-track service offers average approval timelines of seven days, a staggering 90% reduction from normal timelines.



### COVID-19 fast-track review



### Timeline of the COVID-19 fast-track review process compared to the standard review process

Researchers using the fast-track COVID-19 service can also benefit from specialist advice and guidance, information about already approved studies and access to help find the right public involvement for their project to fit their timeline.

Unsurprisingly, researchers have welcomed the service, both in terms of the speed of approval and the helpful advice and information that our staff provide. So, how have we achieved this?

As well as our staff going the extra mile, the goodwill and commitment of members of Research Ethics Committees (RECs) – who give their time for free – is crucial. They have joined ad hoc committees and reviewed applications at very short notice and switched to virtual meetings overnight. Researchers have played their part too, getting in touch early to help us prepare for their application and responding quickly to requests for information needed. A 30% reduction in the number of applications for other types of research has also helped to create capacity at the HRA.

Many researchers ask whether we will be able to retain this kind of service in future for all types of research. We are currently evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on our services and reviewing feedback from researchers and REC members and we are starting to develop options for adapting our model for reviewing research, including the possibility of introducing a fast-track process for other areas or types of research. In the coming months we will work closely with stakeholders, our staff and volunteer community to look at what's possible for patients, the public and UK research.

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