

# 10 YEARS OF THE

The logo for the National Institute for Clinical Research Facility (NICRF) is centered within a large, dotted circular frame. The logo itself consists of the letters 'NICRF' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'N' and 'I' are black, while 'C', 'R', and 'F' are white and set against a green gradient background. To the right of the letters, there are stylized human figures in shades of green, suggesting a focus on people and research.

**NICRF**

**CLINICAL RESEARCH FACILITY**

2023

# INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Clinical Research Facility (NICRF) is a research institution dedicated to advancing medical knowledge, improving patient care, and enhancing healthcare outcomes.

The NICRF was established in September 2013 with funding from the Wellcome Trust and Wolfson Foundation to provide state of the art facilities to support clinical research.

It is a joint venture with Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, the Public Health Agency, and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and over the past 10 years, it has been a hub of cutting-edge research and innovation.

We are delighted to mark a significant milestone as we celebrate a decade of the NICRF. Over the past ten years, the NICRF has played a pivotal role in advancing healthcare research in Northern Ireland, fostering innovation, and improving the lives of countless individuals.

This short report reflects on the accomplishments, and the NICRF's commitment to a brighter future in clinical research.



# CELEBRATING A DECADE: 10 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1

NUMBER OF PATIENT VISITS

21,000+



2

RESEARCH STUDIES SUPPORTED

226

INDUSTRY LED  
86 (38%)



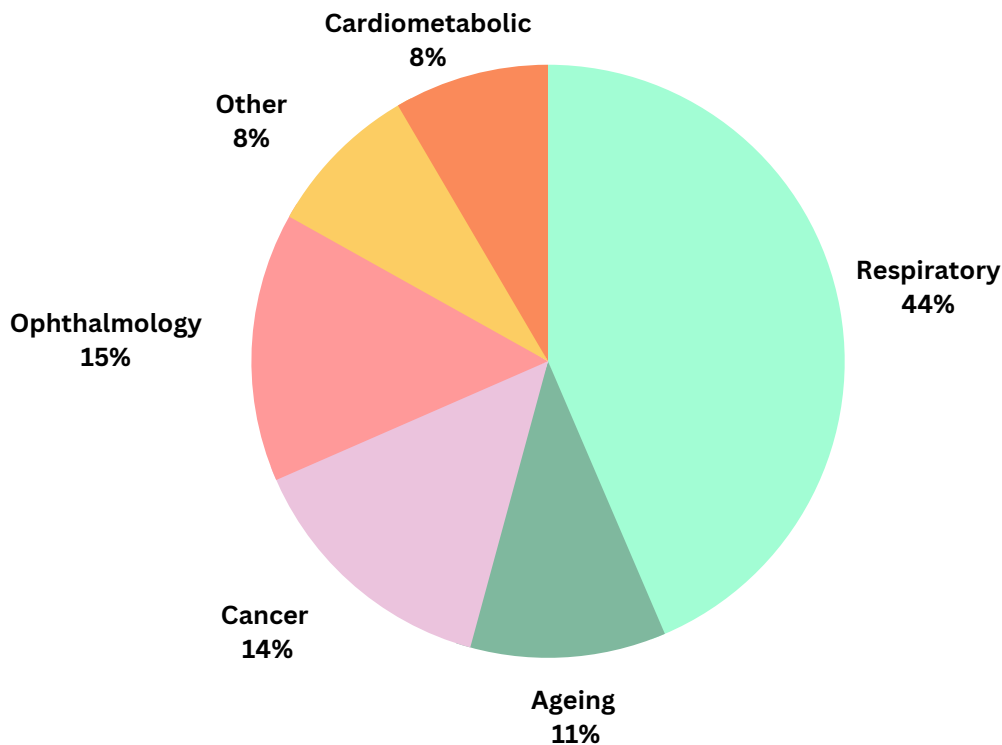
INVESTIGATOR LED  
83 (37%)



PUMP PRIMING  
57 (25%)

3

ALIGNMENT WITH BIG HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES IN NORTHERN IRELAND



4

SUPPORTING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

The NICRF has supported studies that have been disseminated through conferences, publications and patient forums. The NICRF has supported the Research Excellence Framework (a national assessment of the quality of research in Universities) contributing to publications and high quality impact case studies.

# 5

## IMPROVING HEALTHCARE OUTCOMES FOR OUR POPULATION



The NICRF are proud to have been integral to major breakthroughs such as the Nuvaxovid vaccine now available worldwide for immunisation to prevent COVID-19.

Here in the NICRF during COVID we delivered a trial to investigate the safety and efficacy of a now licensed vaccine.

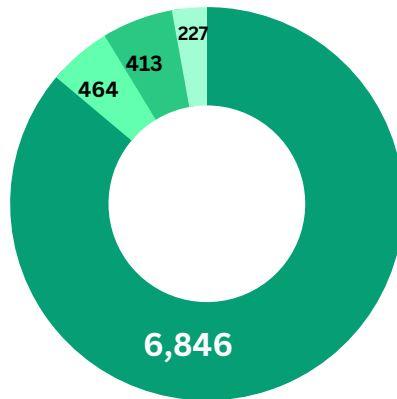
In NI there were:

- 600 participants screened
- Nearly 500 participants completed the trial



The NICRF played a key role in the testing of novel drug therapies (CFTR modulators) which address the underlying cause of Cystic Fibrosis (CF) and now treat over 90% of people with CF.

In December 2022 a total of 7,950 people with CF were taking a CFTR modulator in the UK



- Elexacaftor/Tezacaftor/Ivacaftor
- Lumacaftor/Ivacaftor
- Ivacaftor
- Tezacaftor/Ivacaftor

# 6

## TEAM GROWTH

The NICRF currently boasts a highly skilled and diverse multidisciplinary team.

Over the past decade, we have grown from 3 to 16 staff and we will double our work force from 16-30 in the next 2 years.



# 7

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

The NICRF have 11 bespoke clinical rooms with £1.5 million worth of specialised equipment that is serviced and maintained to an exceptional standard and to industry requirements.



# 8

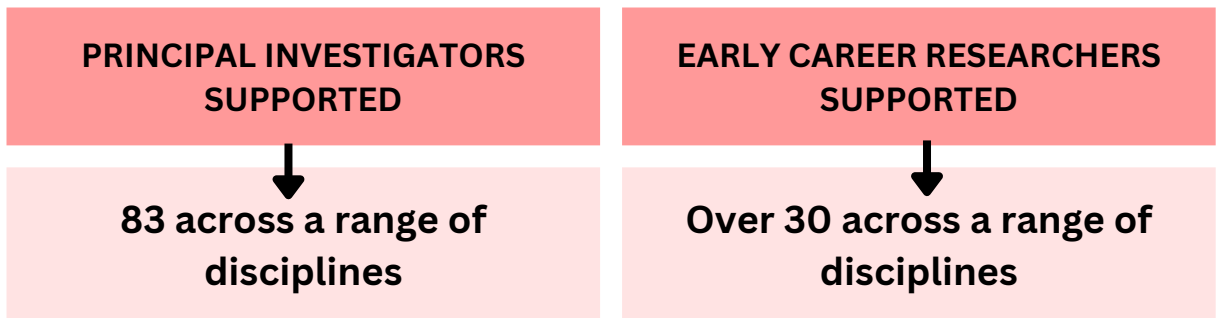
## COLLABORATIONS WITH RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

The NICRF has helped build a diverse research ecosystem with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. We also collaborate with other Trusts, Universities, Pharma and device companies, clinical research organisations and patient groups at a local, national and international level.



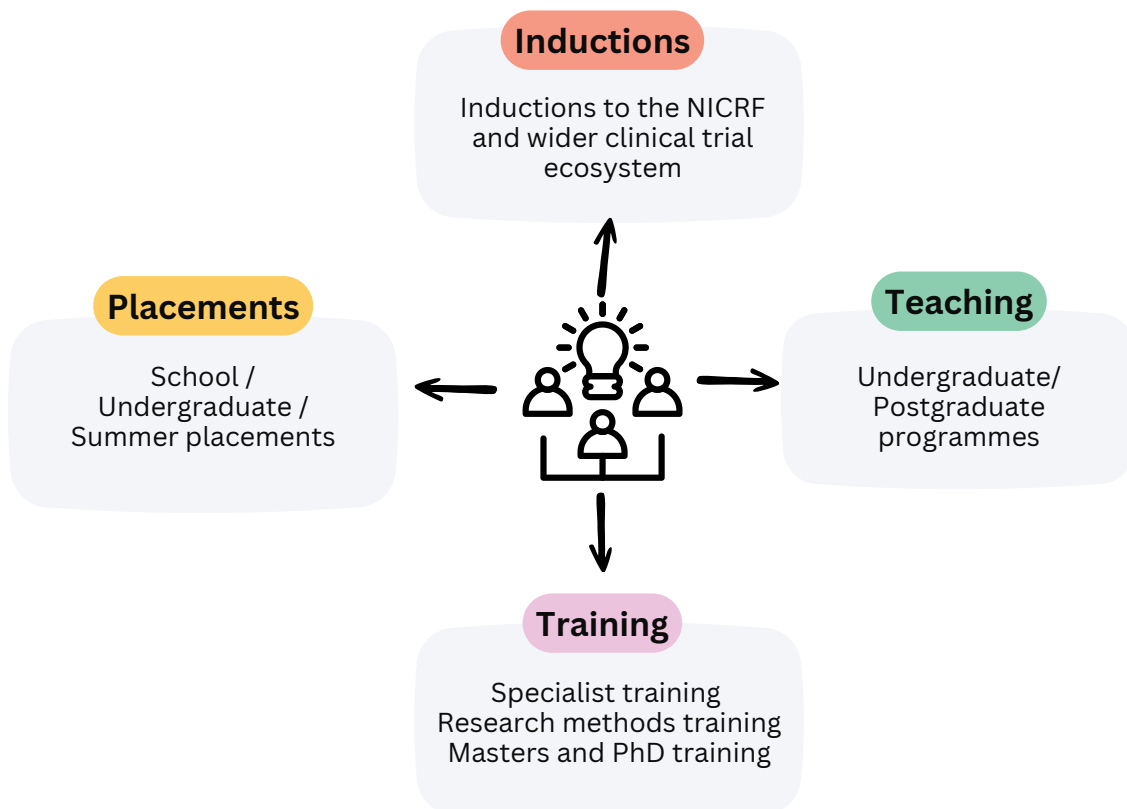
# 9

## CREATING SUSTAINABILITY AND SUPPORTING FUTURE LEADERS



# 10

## EDUCATING THE CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE



# FEEDBACK FROM OUR SERVICE USERS

Patient

*"I was one of the first patients here, and I was on a clinical trial for an extremely rare disease which I have. I have been all over the world, I have been in Great Ormond Street Hospital - This has been the place I have been the most comfortable, the most happy"*

Patient

*"I had never considered participating in a trial, but I was eager to contribute to the search for treatments that could benefit people with Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, and any potential personal benefits would be a welcome bonus. The clinicians discussed the trial with me, which motivated my decision to take part. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be involved in the trial, and my experience has been great, with the research team always making me feel comfortable and at ease"*

*"My son has worn glasses from he was 4 years old, as is typical his prescription increased at every eye sight review. We were recommended to apply to take part in the trial in the hope of slowing the progression. From first contact the researcher was extremely lovely and reassuring. She provided all the relevant information to myself and my husband that put us at ease. My son is autistic and the trial staff have been so accommodating and encouraging and made him feel comfortable at every step! He actually loved going in for his six monthly checks so he could see the research team and tell them about his latest adventures. They made the whole experience fun for him! We are so thankful for the hard work that CHAMP put in as well as the support throughout the process"*

Parent of patient

*"As lead for many studies I've always been so impressed by the talented NICRF team, who work hard in an extremely efficient and skilled manner with a smile and a 'can do' attitude. Thanks and congratulations on a really successful 10 years!" - Prof. Lorcan McGarvey (Chief Investigator)*

Chief Investigator

*"I am a clinical trials coordinator, from a clinical physiologist discipline and the specialist respiratory testing equipment in the NICRF has enabled me to support the inclusion of high quality physiological measurements in clinical trials. iREACH Health will further increase our capability accessibility to specialist clinical physiology services" - Michelle Spence (Clinical Physiologist)*

Clinical Physiologist

Early career researcher

*"As an early clinical academic trainee in respiratory research, the NICRF have provided me with the access to specialist teams and equipment I needed to set up and run my clinical trial in Asthma. Working with experienced research staff has afforded a fantastic learning opportunity to develop my skills as a clinical academic" - Dr. Matthew Eastwood MD (Respiratory Clinical Research Fellow)*

# NEXT 10 YEARS - THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

## iREACH Health

iREACH Health is crucial to Northern Ireland fulfilling its ambition to be a global leader in Life and Health Sciences (LHS) in the next decade, by creating a patient-centred, pro-innovation and digitally enabled clinical research environment.

It brings together the expertise of clinicians, life scientists and data scientists with experienced industry partners to drive improved economic, health and social care outcomes.

The centre, representing a £62 million investment (Belfast Region City Deal, Queen's University Belfast, the Department of Health (HSC Research & Development Division) and philanthropic sources), brings together innovators from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to address major health challenges and tackle inequalities, promoting economic growth, prosperity and better health for all.

Creating in partnership with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust- the largest integrated health and social care Trust in the United Kingdom, and working in partnership with Celerion - one of the world's leading Contract Research Organisations in early phase research, iREACH Health is working with pharmaceutical companies, patients, and global LHS innovators who are moving to benefit from this clinical trial ecosystem.



Overall View of Proposed Development

## IMPACT

- iREACH Health will work at the interface of academic-industry Research & Development delivering innovative clinical trials efficiently and at scale to ensure sustainable growth in the LHS sector.
- It will drive economic development and ultimately deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes to people in Northern Ireland and beyond, whilst attracting and retaining top talent in clinical care and LHS Research & Development.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Dear Stakeholders, Partners, and Supporters,**

This short report highlights the progress, achievements and impact of the NICRF across 10 years. Our success is a testament to the collective efforts of those dedicated to improving the lives of individuals through innovative research. We are proud of our achievements here at the NICRF, and we remain committed to the pursuit of scientific excellence in the coming years. As we reflect on our journey, we want to acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who have played a pivotal role in our success.

**Patients and Participants:** We acknowledge the patients and research participants who trust us with their health and well-being. Your participation in our clinical trials and studies is instrumental in advancing medical knowledge and improving healthcare.

**Our Dedicated Teams over the last 10 years:** We acknowledge Prof Ian Young Principal Investigator; and previous NICRF directors, Prof. Allan Gaw, Prof. Danny McAuley, current NICRF Director and Deputy Director Prof. Judy Bradley, and Prof. Mary Ward. We acknowledge the time and commitment of our Strategic Advisory and Management group which support us with the strategic direction and management of the NICRF.

**Collaborative Partners/Funders:** We acknowledge our funders Wellcome Trust and Wolfson Foundation for their investment in the building and equipment of the facility. Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University as our partner universities, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and Health and Social Care Research and Development, a division of the Public Health Agency.

**Thank you for being an essential part of our journey and for helping us make a positive impact on healthcare and scientific research.**

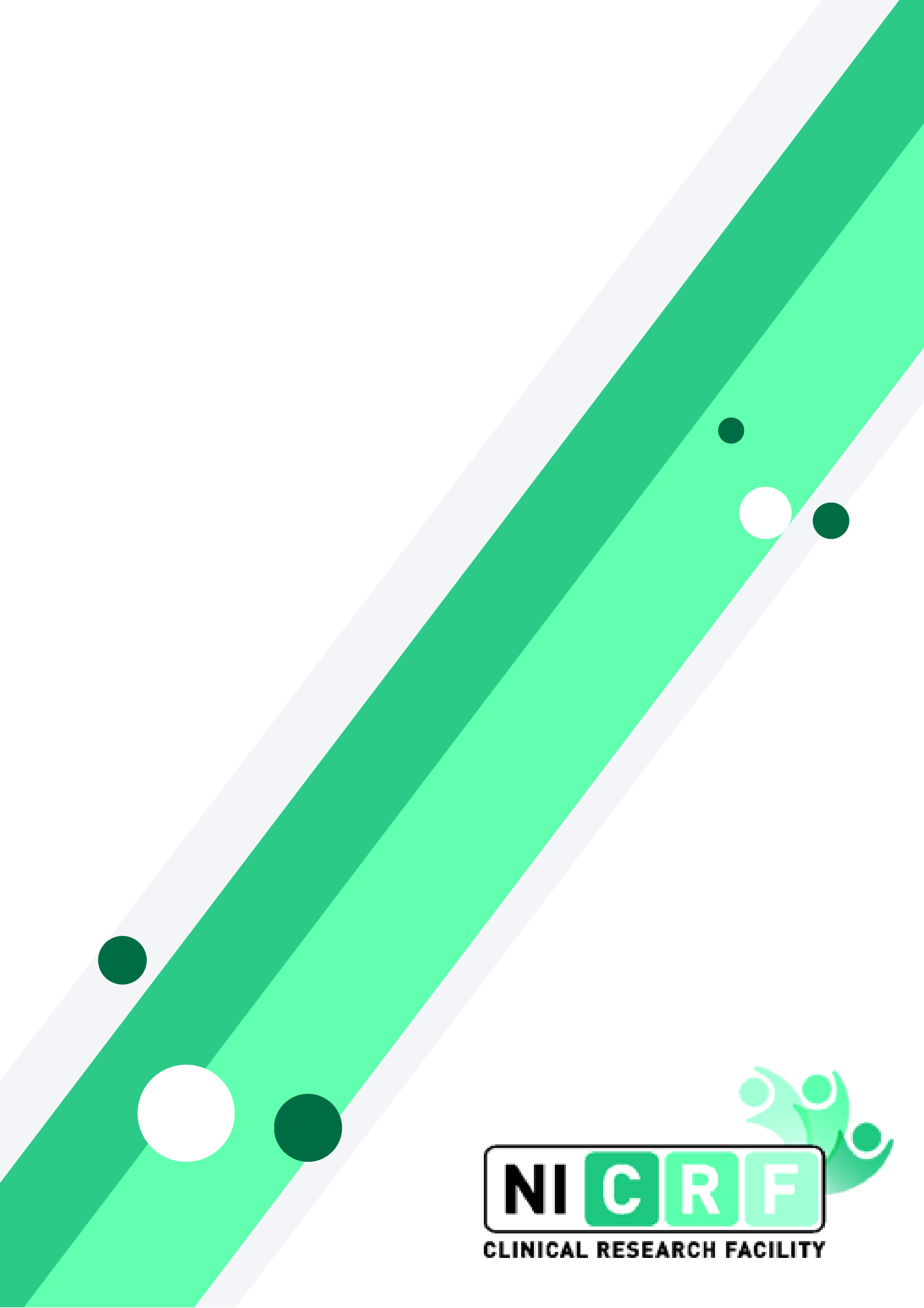




**NICRF Website**



**iREACH Health**



**NI CRF**

**CLINICAL RESEARCH FACILITY**