Rethinking Commercial Research: Embedding Innovation in NHS Bowel Cancer Screening

Chief Investigator: Mr Greg Taylor

Study Manager: Dr Nicky Heady

COLOSPECT

Background

- Bowel cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the UK.

- Current screening uses the FIT test, but many positive results lead to unnecessary colonoscopies.

- This increases NHS burden and causes patient delays and anxiety.

Study Aim

To evaluate whether a new Raman spectroscopy and AI- blood test can better identify which bowel screening patients with a positive FIT result are most in need of urgent colonoscopy.

The goal of the test is to reduce unnecessary procedures, speed up diagnosis, and improve patient care.

Study Design & Delivery

Study Design

Study Type: Multi-centre observational study

Sponsor: Swansea Bay University Health Board

Lead Organisation: Public Health Wales

Academic Partner: Swansea University

Innovation Partner: CanSense (Raman blood test)
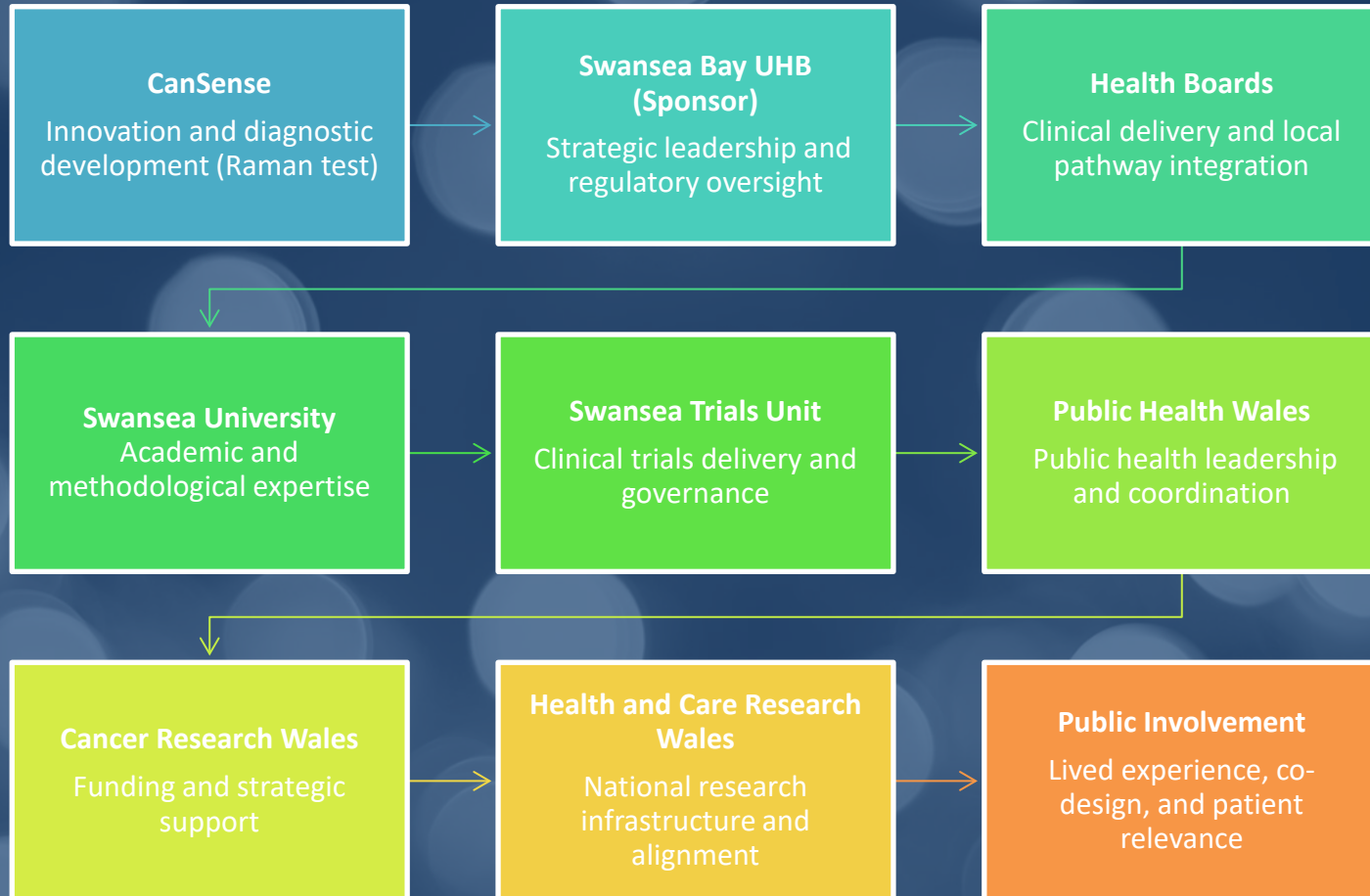
Funded by: Cancer Research Wales

Study Delivery

Trial Delivery Partner: Swansea Trials Unit

Delivery Sites: All 7 Health Boards in Wales

Embedded in: Routine NHS care and bowel cancer screening pathways

Public and Patient Involvement: Ensures relevance, inclusivity, and accessibility

A Collaborative Model – Integrating expertise

CanSense
Innovation and diagnostic development (Raman test)

Swansea Bay UHB (Sponsor)
Strategic leadership and regulatory oversight

Health Boards
Clinical delivery and local pathway integration

Swansea University
Academic and methodological expertise

Swansea Trials Unit
Clinical trials delivery and governance

Public Health Wales
Public health leadership and coordination

Cancer Research Wales
Funding and strategic support

Health and Care Research Wales
National research infrastructure and alignment

Public Involvement
Lived experience, co-design, and patient relevance

Public Involvement – Built with not just for

"Most bowel cancer patient, like myself, want earlier detection and more acceptable screening methods that catch cancer before it gets to an advanced stage. Involving the public in defining research helps ensure new screening approaches are acceptable and reach everyone.

Many different types of new tests are currently being investigated, and it is important that commercially funded projects are encouraged together with those funded by public bodies, but the importance of public involvement in research is not always recognised in commercial companies.

I spoke at the Annual Outsourcing in Clinical Trials Conference to highlight to commercial companies the benefits public involvement can bring to research.'' **(Julie Hepburn – PPI representative)**
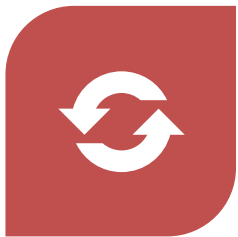
Study Progress

14 sites open

Target: 2,000 participants

Recruited to Date: 1,400+

Percentage Achieved: 70%

Potential Impact

REDUCE UNNECESSARY COLONOSCOPIES BY UP TO 30%

ESTIMATED NHS SAVINGS: £1 MILLION ANNUALLY

IMPROVE WAITING TIMES AND PATIENT EXPERIENCE

MORE EFFICIENT USE OF NHS RESOURCES

Conclusion

COLOSPECT is successfully demonstrating the feasibility of embedding commercial diagnostics into NHS workflows, with strong multi-sector collaboration.

Why this matters now!

With rising demand on NHS services, workforce pressures, and a growing need for faster, more targeted diagnostics, studies like Colospect arrives at a critical moment.

It demonstrates how collaboration across innovation, academia, healthcare, and lived experience can drive patient-centred solutions — with the potential to improve outcomes, reduce waiting times, and make smarter use of NHS resources.

This is not just research — it's a blueprint for how we meet the challenges of modern healthcare, together and not in silo

Contact & Acknowledgements

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Study Page: https://www.swanseatrialsunit.org/trials/colospect