The Medical Research Council (MRC) is a publicly funded government agency responsible for coordinating and funding medical research in the United Kingdom.

The MRC focuses on high-impact research and has provided the financial support and scientific expertise behind a number of medical breakthroughs, including the development of penicillin and the discovery of the structure of DNA. Research funded by the MRC has produced 31 Nobel Prize winners to date.

The MRC needs to attract the very best scientists and researchers to fill a variety of postdoc and research assistant positions.

Most of the MRC’s hiring was being taken care of externally until Autumn 2015, when it was brought in-house. A new recruitment system was introduced, and the MRC began to look at different options to advertise open positions. As most of their jobs required scientists, one option was sourcing candidates on ResearchGate through the recruitment platform.

"Most of our employees need PhDs, and we look for a good scientific reputation in candidates," said Hayley Page, Recruitment Coordinator at the MRC. "We take into account publication history and other scientific metrics." 84% of ResearchGate’s 9 million members have postgraduate qualifications, with 18% in medicine, giving the MRC a huge pool of candidates to draw from.

In addition to postgraduate qualifications, it was important for the MRC’s open positions to attract applicants with particular specialized knowledge: "It can be more difficult to recruit for roles that integrate science and other disciplines, for example..."
bio-statisticians, where we need IT and technical knowledge along with scientific knowledge.” To address this concern, ResearchGate’s targeting team generated a list of keywords, specifying users by their skills, career and education level, location, and publication history.

The targeting process meant that MRC jobs were displayed to relevant potential candidates, as well as recommended to researchers who were not directly searching for a job but who were related to the active seekers. “A lot of our adverts go on jobs.ac.uk and Nature, but these just target people who are looking for jobs, whereas ResearchGate also looks at a more passive audience who might not be looking for a job,” said Page.

So far, their three job application pages have a combined view count of 5.9k, with 245 applications—all scientists and researchers.

Page is happy with the level of interest MRC job posts have attracted, saying, “ResearchGate helps us target specific vacancies to a dedicated audience of scientists, and we find it to be a cost-effective option.”

245 Applications
5900+ Views
4.7% Overall applicants

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Hayley Page
Recruitment Coordinator
Medical Research Council