Charlie Harper, is a part-time PhD student funded by the HTMR Network and based at the University of Oxford began his PhD in October 2017. Charlie’s research is focused around the processes of clinical trial follow-up, and whether more efficient means such as the use of electronic health records could be used as the primary source of follow-up for renal trials.

This is what Charlie had to say about his experiences, so far, of undertaking a PhD as member of the HTMR Network:

* As a PhD student the network and interconnection between different universities in the UK is invaluable to trial methodology research. A good example of this is that due to the HTMR network I was able to meet another PhD student who was conducting research in a similar area to me, and was able to discuss ideas and challenges that helped the direction of my own research.
* The hub has been incredibly supportive of me undertaking a part-time PHD, and I am aware of equivalent support provided to other PhD students within the hub who may have had a change in circumstance.
* I have so far attended two HTMR student meetings. These events are incredibly useful for PhD students in trial methodology research as they allow us both to broaden our understanding of different areas of research, but also encourage us to hone our own research questions and gain insightful questions from other students. It has also been a very good forum for training and future career advice, the hub has been very supportive of us not only thinking about the present but also our futures.
* There are a number of additional unique opportunities that the hub provides, these include: internships, webinars, networking events, access to methodology conferences, and frequent communication about recent research and collaborations.

In total I believe the value of the HTMR Network substantially compliments that of the support to PHD students by their university (in my case Oxford). Historically PHDs have been renowned for being a very isolating and lonely experience, in which students only had direct contact with a small number of supervisors within that university. The TMRP cohort will allow students to break out of their institution’s bubble, and to discuss and share ideas with researchers from all over the UK (in addition to all the other opportunities highlighted above). The TMRP Partnership will not only benefit the PHD student but also the UK trials methodology community more generally.