



Participant Newsletter

Welcome to the Autumn issue of our SIREN newsletter. As we move towards the winter season, when the NHS and its staff face high levels of circulating respiratory viruses, SIREN is preparing to launch the SIREN+ Winter Pressures sub-study for 2025/26.

Read on to learn more about this sub-study, as well as updates on our collaborations with the Francis Crick Institute and University of Edinburgh.

Coming up in this issue...

SIREN+ Winter Pressures sub-study 2025/26

Take part in our winter survey of respiratory symptoms and time off work

Understanding the immune response following flu vaccination

SIREN is working with the Francis Crick Institute to characterise the immune response to flu after vaccination and identify correlates of protection.

Investigating whether COVID-19 infection and vaccination may impact cardiac markers

Academic partners at University of Edinburgh will investigate the relationship between heart health markers and COVID-19 infection and vaccination.

Announcing SIREN's new Principal Investigator (PI)

Prof. Susan Hopkins, SIREN Chief Investigator (CI), has been announced as the new CEO of the UK Health Security Agency. Victoria Hall will now be taking over as SIREN CI.



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WINTER PRESSURES

SIREN+ Winter Pressures sub-study 2025/26

What?

- SIREN Winter Pressures sub-study 2024/25 has provided valuable insights into respiratory illness during winter and time off work in healthcare workers, which is crucial for understanding NHS resilience and the overall burden of respiratory infection.
- Similarly to last year, the SIREN+ Winter Pressures sub-study will collect information on respiratory symptoms and time off work via fortnightly questionnaires. At this stage, we are not asking you to provide any samples, but we may do this in the future.

Why?

- Every year, as the cold weather sets in, and respiratory infection rates rise in both staff and patients, the NHS faces a particularly challenging period commonly known as 'Winter pressures'.
- Collecting data on symptoms and time off work in healthcare staff helps us understand the burden of respiratory infections during this season and compare it to other populations.

Who?

- All current SIREN participants will be given the opportunity to take part.
- This includes anyone who has not withdrawn from the study, and who continues to receive communications.

When?

- Recruitment into this sub-study will open in October 2025, and all eligible participants will be sent an invitation link by email or text.
- Similarly to previous years, the sub-study will end in March 2026.





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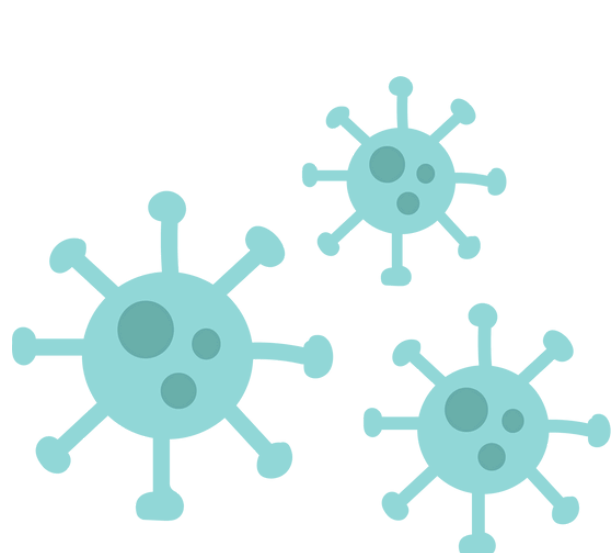
NEW COLLABORATION

The immune response following flu vaccination: a collaboration with the Francis Crick Institute

We have studied antibody responses to influenza over the winter 2023/24. Sera from over 3,000 SIREN participants collected over this period were included in this analysis.



We teamed up with researchers at the Francis Crick Institute, and together we generated over 27,000 results, testing over 9,000 samples against three of the four flu strains in that year's vaccine (one strain hasn't returned after 2020, and might be removed from upcoming vaccines). We used a newly developed antibody test to see if we can do better than the standard antibody test which hasn't changed since the 1940s. In SIREN, we can also match up these antibody results with the PCR testing results and find how much antibody seems to be needed to stop infection. We're still refining the analysis, and we will keep you updated of the results in future newsletters.





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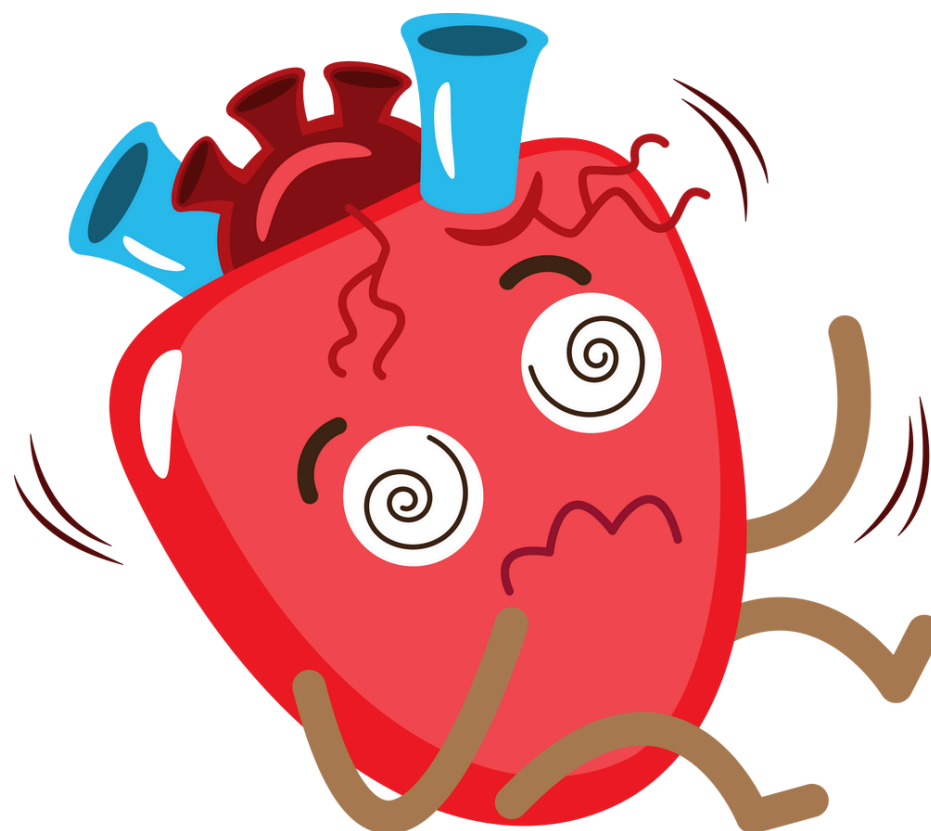
NEW COLLABORATION



Investigating whether COVID-19 infection and vaccination may impact in cardiac markers: a collaboration with University of Edinburgh

Blood tests for cardiac markers can be used to evaluate heart muscle injury. For example, they can be used to determine if someone is having heart attack.

However, one of these tests, called cardiac troponin, may be affected when the immune system is activated, which can lead to misleading results. In collaboration with the SIREN study, researchers at the University of Edinburgh will use left-over samples from SIREN participants to understand the impact of the immune response to COVID-19 infection and vaccination on cardiac troponin measurements. The findings from this study will help clinicians to better interpret cardiac markers results, which may improve patient outcomes and inform public health policy.





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EXCITING CHANGE

Announcing SIREN's new Chief Investigator

We're excited to announce that Prof. Susan Hopkins has been nominated as UKHSA new Chief Executive Officer and Victoria Hall (Consultant Epidemiologist at UKHSA), who has been leading the day-to-day delivery of the SIREN study since 2020, will be taking forward as SIREN's new Chief Investigator. Her leadership, commitment and ongoing dedication will continue to drive the SIREN study forward and ensure we continue to deliver important research and surveillance for healthcare workers.



Prof. Susan Hopkins



Victoria Hall



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As always, a huge thank you for supporting the SIREN study. With your help, we are excited to be launching the SIREN+ Winter Pressures Sub-Study 2025/26, and look forward to sharing more about the results of the study in due course.



If you have any questions or want to get in touch, please email
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