The Midlands Medical Imaging Network (MMIN), part of Midlands Innovation Health, exemplifies the region's excellence in imaging innovation. The network brings together interdisciplinary expertise from across the region in the acquisition, analysis and interpretation of medical imaging data in health and pathology. With world-leading expertise in techniques such as MRI and magnetoencephalography (MEG), members are also highly skilled in the bioinformatics and computational approaches needed to exploit the rich data sets acquired.

Dr Andrew Bagshaw, Midlands Medical Imaging Network

"Medical imaging is a fundamentally inter-disciplinary field, where developments can only occur through the combined efforts of scientists and clinicians coming from a wide range of specialities. We need physicists and engineers to improve existing tools and develop new ones; computer scientists and bioinformaticians to deal with the complexity of the data; neuroscientists, psychologists and physiologists to interpret the data; and clinicians to provide the questions and problems that patients need solving.

"Finding all of this expertise at a single institution is rare, but we are in a good position in the Midlands: we have the full range of internationally recognised institutions and individuals available.

"What we are trying to achieve with MMIN is to consolidate this expertise and build the critical mass of connected researchers that can really allow us to move the field forward. We want to provide new ways of imaging the body and use them to provide fundamental insights in health and pathology.

"It is really about bringing people together to stimulate new research, share best practice and to ensure that researchers are exposed to the best environment they can be. One example would be the way we have come together to share our experiences of lockdown, which has been central to building a consensus for how medical imaging research can restart safely. After the first lockdown, the collaborations fostered by MMIN allowed us to put protocols into place to get research up and running again.

"Another example is the careers event for early-career researchers we ran in the summer. It brought together medical imaging students and fellows from across the Midlands and exposed them to the variety of potential careers in academia, industry and the health sector. This will help to make the Midlands an attractive place for medical imaging and ensure that clinical use of medical imaging techniques is backed up by cutting-edge research.

"We share the same goals as Midlands Engine Health and the partnership has already been invaluable in supporting our development as a network. Through partners' experience in other fields, we can learn from what other similar networks have achieved to make sure we are able to develop our network to achieve its goals.

"More broadly, Midlands Health Engine can help us to develop our links with industry and the public sector, which complements our existing expertise from the academic and health sectors. As we develop, we can hopefully be a central point for medical imaging for people from any background, a point of contact and collaboration which can ensure that medical imaging in the Midlands continues to grow."