Patient Discovery Project

European Animal Research Association

A practical guide to bringing patients and researchers together

Since 2023, EARA has delivered eight Discovery Days across four European countries

Discovery Days create opportunities for people living with medical conditions to **see** research first-hand and **ask** questions, while researchers gain **valuable insight** into **patients' priorities** and **lived experiences**.

1 Find your partners

Bring the right people around the table

- Identify research teams and a patient organisation or advocacy group.
- Agree on roles, responsibilities and the purpose of the day.

2 Set clear objectives

Decide what you want participants to take away

Define 2–4 objectives for patients and researchers. These might include:

- understanding the research process
- learning about animal research and NAMs
- identifying patient priorities

3 Co-design the programme

Build the day around dialogue, not presentations

Combine short research talks with facility visits, demonstrations, patient perspectives, Q&A and informal discussion.

4 Prepare everyone

Good preparation creates better conversations

- Give patients practical information and an opportunity to submit questions in advance.
- EARA offers **tailored training** to help researchers communicate clearly, address sensitive topics and engage confidently with patient audiences.

5 Open the doors

Show research as it really happens

- Take participants into relevant laboratories and facilities.
- Show different approaches: cell-based research, patient samples, imaging, computational methods, other NAMs and animal research.

6 Talk openly about animals & welfare

Transparency builds trust

- Explain why animals are used, how the 3Rs are applied and how complementary methods are considered.
- Discuss housing, veterinary care, pain management, welfare monitoring and ethical and regulatory oversight.

7 Listen & learn

Make patient voices part of the conversation

- Create space for patients to share their experiences, priorities and unmet needs.
- Encourage researchers to ask questions.
- Use open Q&A, small-group discussions and informal conversations.

8 Follow up & build on it

Make the Discovery Day the beginning, not the end

- Collect feedback, share key outcomes and follow up on unanswered questions.
- Connect participants through **EARA's Patient Network** to encourage continued patient involvement in research, dialogue and future activities.

EARA can support you with training and preparation for your Discovery Day.

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