

# Cardiovascular Research Support Unit (GAIC): Looking at a Portuguese Clinical Research Support Unit

## Gabinete de Apoio à Investigação Cardiovascular (GAIC): A Visão Portuguesa do Gabinete de Apoio à Investigação Clínica

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There is an absence of clear definitions and evidence to support Clinical Research Support Units (CRSUs), although they are a critical factor in successful clinical study development, management, and reporting.<sup>1</sup> Around the world, there has been a growing focus on the importance of these units.<sup>1-4</sup> Here, we propose a closer look at a Portuguese CRSU, GAIC (the Cardiovascular Research Support Unit), an entity dedicated to supporting clinical research in the Heart and Vessels Department at Centro Hospitalar Lisboa Norte, EPE (CHULN) and in the Centro Cardiovascular da Universidade de Lisboa (CCUL).

This office's primary role is study coordination, and it has Clinical Research Coordinators (CRCs) dedicated to clinical research on a full-time manner, which has allowed for an enormous development in the Heart and Vessels Department in its first 10 years of existence. GAIC also offers support to research teams,

provides specialized training in clinical research, and disseminates information about scientific meetings, programs, and training.

As you can see from the graph below (Fig. 1), in the last 10 years GAIC has allowed for incredible, steady growth in both non-interventional and interventional studies, although the latter has had much more significant progress.

With interventional studies going from 2 to 55 (27 with medical devices and 28 drug-specific clinical trials) and overall research production having tripled (Fig. 1), this CRSU is a clear example of success and another instance in which having a specialized entity with qualified and dedicated CRCs arises many opportunities for investigators and the institution.

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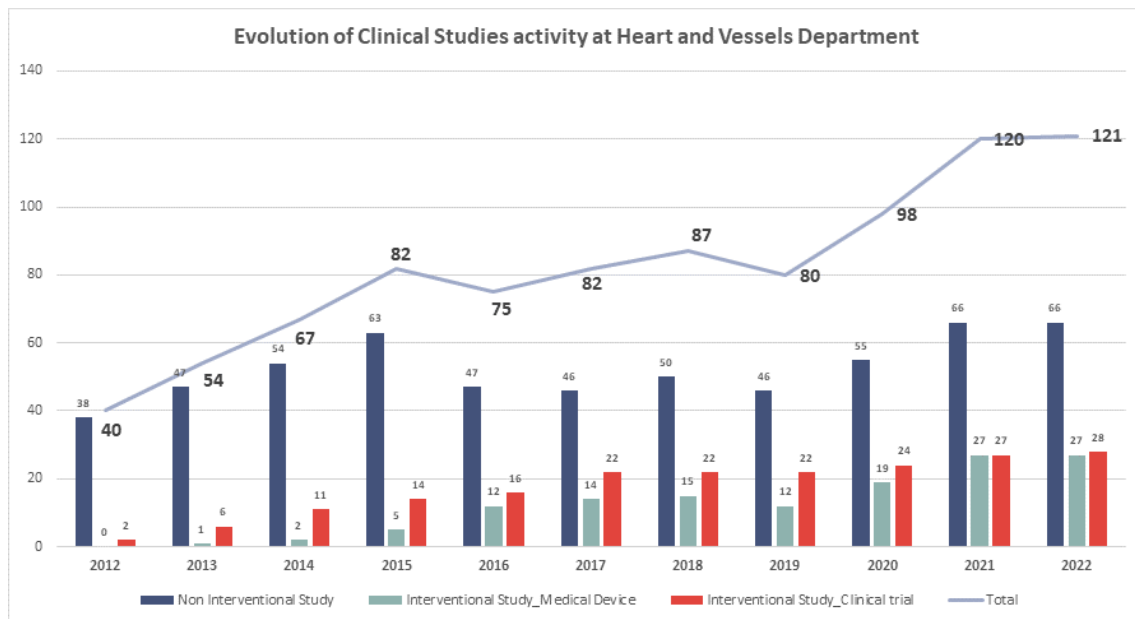


Figure 1. Evolution of Clinical Studies activity at Heart and Vessels Department.

The existence of a robust research unit will therefore allow for the research center to gain an international reputation of excellence while supporting smaller center-born projects – by seizing the strengths and opportunities its team presents. Other academic possibilities arise with a solid research unit and CRC, such as training programs for the health professional, Master's Degrees in Clinical Research, and others. This role in educating clinical staff is of the utmost importance and must not be forgotten.

Bringing the case of this successful Portuguese CRSU, our aim is to start searching for evidence of the implementation of these units, compiling metrics, and documenting outcomes to be able to prove the importance and the impact of these types of units in clinical research.

## Responsabilidades Éticas

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**IC:** Concept, writing and final approval

**CG:** Collection, data compilation and final approval

## Declaração de Contribuição

**IC:** Conceito e elaboração do manuscrito

**CG:** Colheita e compilação de dados

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