University of Warwick researchers are to improve the lives of India's millions of psychosis sufferers.

The National Institute of Health Research's (NIHR) Global Health Research Unit has awarded the University's Warwick Medical School £1.5 million (almost USD 2 million) to work with this highly vulnerable and disadvantaged group. The award will be used to improve their health, wellbeing and functioning.

In India psychosis is a leading cause of disability and affects between seven and eight million people. In the absence of adequate treatment and support many of them languish in long stay hospitals for years in appalling conditions or drift into homelessness and destitution. The research award aims to identify sufferers early and ensure that they regain their health and wellbeing.

The grant has been made to the NIHR Global Health Research Group on Psychosis Outcomes: the Warwick-India-Canada {WIC} Network at the University of Warwick, which is led by Professor Swaran Singh along with partners in All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi; Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) Chennai, and Douglas Hospital, McGill University Montreal.

Prof Singh said: “We are delighted to have received this grant. Early treatment of first-episode and untreated psychosis is key to reducing burden of disability for this neglected group. We have been successful and developing and implementing early intervention strategies in UK and the developing world. There is a great opportunity that such interventions can be tailored to the Indian context that deliver similar gains”

The three-year project will lead to evidence-informed interventions relevant to India, such as culturally appropriate interventions for families, raising standards of care, and using digital technologies to overcome infrastructure problems. Professor Singh added: “The Warwick-India-Canada network will deliver measurable individual, family and societal gains by alleviating suffering, enhancing recovery, preventing social exclusion, and reducing emotional and financial burden on families, while helping policy makers to implement innovative community-care models that exploit the enormous potential of the digital and mobile technologies.”

The University of Warwick is also receiving £5,686,767 from the NIHR Global Health Research Unit to find better ways of delivering healthcare to slum dwellers.

The long-term aims of the project include finding the best ways to deliver healthcare to people living in slums in Asia and Africa and then to persuade and work with politicians and other officials to make these changes.

The grants are a result of the 2016 NIHR invitation to UK-based universities and research institutes to submit applications to deliver applied global health research. Sixty million pounds were made available to successful universities and research institutes looking to expand their existing global health work or for new entrants to the field.