



Issue 40 | May 2021

CoMH eNEWS

College of Medicine and Health, UCC



University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

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Vaccine Rollout



Honorary Fellowship



Reflection



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Retirement



HIHI Healthcare





Dear Colleagues,

I am heartened to say with a great degree of certainty that we are seeing light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel. With approximately 2 million doses of vaccine given to our population as I write this, we now have over 10% of the population fully vaccinated including the most vulnerable groups. With the mass vaccination programme now well underway, if we can maintain the supply chain for vaccine we will be in a great position for the start of the new academic year. A new development which will help with the roll out will be the recruitment of students in the later years of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Midwifery, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy as vaccinators. Students can register at the following link www.hbsrecruitmentservices.ie/registerinterest/ Although this is good news and it is a relief to see the easing of restrictions, we must not

become complacent, infection rates are still not low enough and we must remain vigilant, but we can certainly celebrate the position we are in now compared to this time last year.

Staff and students of the College of Medicine and Health (CoMH) have done us proud with throughout the pandemic with an “all-hands-on-deck” response in solidarity with our colleagues in the HSE. Thank you to each and every one of you. Most recently, participation of our staff in the vaccination roll out has been commendable and is highlighted in this Spring edition of our newsletter.

In this edition of our newsletter, we bring to you a brand new ‘**Hospital News Section**’ with contributions from the Mercy University Hospital (MUH), Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH), and the Bon Secours Hospital, Cork. CUMH have demonstrated how they responded to the “shadow pandemic” with an insightful and compassionate article about the pandemic within our own homes that has run in parallel to the one in our healthcare system; the lockdowns, the home-schooling, the banana bread! You will also read a really interesting update on Research Collaborations between CoMH and the Bon Secours, and a fantastic article on the GI function Lab at the Mercy University Hospital (MUH), one of the largest in Europe.

Some of the highlights in this edition also include features detailing the **rollout of the vaccine** across **Ireland South Women & Infants**

Directorate, and a focus on the recent philanthropic donation for the **Horgan Chair in Neonatology**. The generosity of the Horgans in supporting this Chair will add considerable weight to research and teaching in neonatology and enhance the leadership of clinical and translational research at INFANT.

While we circulate this newsletter electronically to our CoMH staff and our colleagues throughout the healthcare sector, it seems pertinent to reflect on the recent HSE cyber-attack. The cruelty of such a vicious malware attack on our healthcare system, attacking the services that support the most vulnerable in our society, is beyond comprehension. As Chief Academic Officer to the SSWHG, I have seen the speed with which the health services leadership has responded to the attack, and the commitment and engagement of staff across the services in trouble shooting and problem solving the pervasive challenges of this dreadful situation. I’m sure that you will be pleased to hear (but not surprised) that our IT staff and IT students under the leadership of Director of IT Services, Ger Culley, have provided extensive support to colleagues in the service to help establish new systems and work arounds and to generally enable the service. There is no denying that the fall out of this devastating attack will be seen for some time to come. It is perhaps opportune to reiterate some advice given last week by Ger Cully to please be aware and be vigilant of the very real cyber threats out there. **Remember, never click on a link that you are suspicious of or that you**

are not expecting. Please contact ITsecurity@ucc.ie with any concerns you may have or to report incidents; this email account is being monitored on a constant basis.

On a much more positive note, **congratulations** to all our **final year Medical students** who have just graduated! You are entering the medical profession at a time when the world has been shown how much we rely on our healthcare system. The health service needs you. You are the pipeline which maintains the delivery of health care.

Finally, my congratulations to our colleagues in School of Nursing & Midwifery on the publication of their 2020 Annual Report, which can be found [HERE](#).

I hope you all enjoy reading our Spring newsletter and I would like to thank all the contributors! I would urge you all to look after all aspects of your health and wellbeing, in particular your mental health. I would also ask you to look out for those around you. This has been a challenging year book ended by a Pandemic and a Cyber attack but hopefully we are in the final pages of these chapters.

Professor Helen Whelton

Head of College of Medicine and Health
University College Cork

Second CiSA Seed Funding Launch

The second CiSA seed funding scheme is being made available for applications on the 15th March to provide an opportunity for new research collaborations between CoMH staff in the member Schools (Clinical Therapies, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing and Midwifery, Pharmacy and Public Health) and all healthcare aligned staff in affiliated clinical institutions.

The remit of CiSA is to promote collaborative translational research within the UCC CoMH and affiliated healthcare aligned services. It is envisaged that in particular, CiSA will facilitate the development of clinical and non-clinical researcher collaborations across all CoMH Schools and affiliated healthcare aligned services. Funding should be used to develop new or substantially new research areas, and to foster them to a point where a more extensive grant application can be made. It is not intended for existing, well-established collaborations where researchers have significant funding already in place.

The launch was marked by a well-attended online event at which the awardees of the inaugural CiSA seed funding presented about their research and how CiSA has enabled their work.

Find out more about CiSA [HERE](#)



CUH was the 8th largest site worldwide of a total of 143 sites in 20 countries for the Phase III ADVOCATE Study, led locally in CUH by Dr Michael Clarkson and supported by the CRF-C.

The study looked at the use of a novel orally administered treatment (Avacopan) for the auto-immune disease ANCA-associated vasculitis.

ANCA-associated vasculitis is a systemic auto-immune disease in which over-activation of the complement system further activates neutrophils, leading to inflammation and eventual destruction of small blood vessels. This results in organ damage and failure, with the kidney as the major target, and is fatal if not treated.

Avacopan improved kidney function and showed a significant advantage over current treatment options that often come with added toxicities-fewer participants had serious adverse events in the Avacopan group than in the control group. A greater improvement in health-related quality of life was also measured in this group.

The FDA is now evaluating a New Drug Application (NDA) for Avacopan for the treatment of ANCA-associated vasculitis.

The study has just been published in the high-impact New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). Read more [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Photo: Andrew Bradley



Professor George Shorten awarded DSc on Acknowledgment of his Excellent work in Health Sciences Research

Congratulations to Professor George Shorten, Professor of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine and Consultant Anaesthesiologist in CUH on the acknowledgement of his superb work in Health and Sciences Research at the recent CoMH Conferings. Professor Helen Whelton was delighted to congratulate Professor Shorten on this prestigious accolade.

Dr Shorten's research has been conducted with colleagues, mentors and students from around the world including the University of Toronto, Harvard Medical School, University of Western Australia, Queens University Belfast and, of course, his alma mater, UCC. Over three decades, he has sought to identify means by which anaesthetic practice could be advanced to improve patient outcome after surgical procedures. The overall intent behind the work was to optimize clinical decisions and individual performance so that drugs, devices, technology and techniques were used more effectively and safely. The specific areas addressed included acute postoperative and persistent pain,

complications associated with the use of muscle relaxants, perioperative organ protection, and human performance in healthcare. In leading Europe's effort to reform the training of anaesthesiologists, he and his colleagues have established a roadmap for all healthcare disciplines to transition to competency-based training. According to Stefan de Hert, President of the European Society of Anaesthesiologists, "Professor Shorten's work on evidence-based training of health professionals has had a defining influence". Jannicke Mellin-Olsen, President of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists summarised his contribution as follows: "The team in Cork led by Professor Shorten has provided a sound pedagogical and (importantly) scientific basis to employ high and low fidelity simulation devices and virtual reality. This has been achieved by anchoring "what is trained" and "what is measured" to that which effects meaningful patient outcome (both errors and safe practice). This has proven to be an important enabler of the global move to Competency-Based Training."

Dr Niamh Coffey awarded the John Zamet Memorial Prize in Periodontal Research

Dr Niamh Coffey, Clinical Fellow in Restorative Dentistry and PhD Candidate, has been awarded the John Zamet Memorial Prize in Periodontal Research by the Alpha Omega London Chapter. This competition is open to all postgraduate students studying Periodontology across the United Kingdom and Ireland. The prize was established to recognise the contribution made to clinical periodontology by the late Dr John Zamet and was presented by Mrs. Susan Zamet on behalf of the Alpha Omega Society. The prize ceremony took place on 26th January 2021 where Niamh presented interim results of her doctoral research: "Periodontal Health of Adults with Cystic Fibrosis: A systematic review and clinical study". This research is part of a larger HRB-funded study into the Oral Health of Adults with Cystic Fibrosis.

This study is a collaboration between Cork University Dental School and Hospital, the Adult Cystic Fibrosis Unit in CUH, and Cystic Fibrosis Ireland. Congratulations Niamh and well done on representing UCC so well.



Above: Dr Niamh Coffey, Clinical Fellow in Restorative Dentistry and PhD Candidate

Dr Anthony Fauci given Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians Ireland – a note from the Dean of Medicine



It is wonderful that Dr Anthony S Fauci, one of the best-known doctors/clinician scientists globally, has been honoured through honorary fellowship by the RCPI. The **YouTube presentation** of the conferral and conversation between our UCC School of Medicine colleague Professor Mary Horgan, President, RCPI, and Dr Fauci is highly recommended viewing and I have received Professor Horgan's permission to circulate it. Dr Fauci is inspirational at so many levels – his voice, actions and behaviours are an endorsement in the value of excellence in medical practice informed by science and underpinned by trust, personal and professional integrity. Congratulations to Dr Fauci and thanks to Professor Horgan for sharing this RCPI event with us.

Professor Paula O'Leary

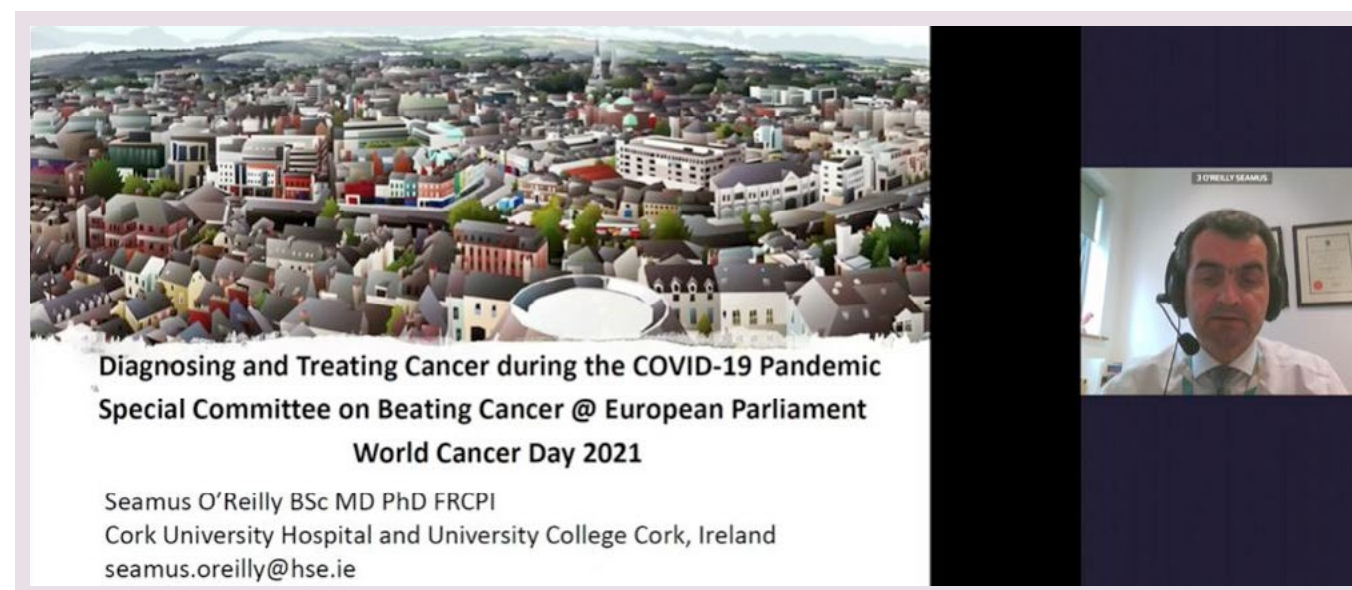
Above: Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the chief medical advisor to the US President

Dr Seamus O'Reilly presents to the European parliament on diagnosing and beating cancer in the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr Seamus O'Reilly gave a fascinating presentation to the European Parliament's Special Committee on Beating Cancer in February. His presentation covered the impact of COVID-19 on cancer services, what living with cancer is like during a pandemic, and the impact of the pandemic on cancer healthcare workers.

His presentation concluded by highlighting ways that the European Parliament can help cancer patients in Ireland in both the short- and long-term, including accelerating the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, reinforcing mental health supports for patients and healthcare workers, and engaging in workforce planning to address the 1 million European healthcare worker deficit that existed before the pandemic.

Watch Dr O'Reilly's presentation [HERE](#) or view his slides [HERE](#)



Above: Dr Seamus O'Reilly giving his presentation to the European Parliament's Special Committee on Beating Cancer

€1.2 million awarded to Dr Joe McVeigh and VR4REHAB research team

Dr Joe McVeigh, Head of Discipline of Physiotherapy, is a member of a European consortium which has been successful in obtaining a grant of approximately €1.2 million from Interreg North West Europe 2nd Call for Capitalisation. Joe joins a well-established research team, VR4REHAB, that focuses on enabling the co-creation of Virtual Reality-based rehabilitation tools. VR4Rehab consists of researchers, clinics, therapists, patients and SMEs active in the field of VR. VR4Rehab has created a network in which the state-of-the-art VR-technology engages with rehabilitation specialists to answer the rehabilitation needs of patients and their therapists. The current grant extends the previous work of VR4Rehab and will focus on innovative VR solutions for COVID-19 rehabilitation and ‘Long Covid’.

The COVID-19 pandemic has of course had a devastating impact on society. The pandemic has also left many with persistent and debilitating long-term symptoms commonly referred to as long covid. Long covid occurs in 10% of people infected and presents as a wide spectrum of fluctuating or episodic signs and symptoms. Common symptoms include fatigue, breathlessness, cough, chest pain, palpitations, cognitive deficits, joint pain and neurological

symptoms. The impact of long covid on Primary Care and community services is likely to be substantial going forward. Dr McVeigh states that ‘effective rehabilitation will be essential for those suffering from the long-term impact of COVID-19. I am delighted to join this European research group to develop VR solutions to optimize rehabilitation and accelerate patients’ recovery, through the co-creation of VR-based rehabilitation tools.’ The VR4Rehab consortium consists of Sint Maartenskliniek (the Netherlands), European Association of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality (EUROVR) (Belgium), St. Mauritius Therapieklinik (Germany), Teesside University (UK), Université de Lille 1 - Sciences et Technologies (France), Games Solution Lab (the Netherlands), In4Care (Belgium) and University College Cork.



Pictured left:
Dr Joe McVeigh,
Head of Discipline
of Physiotherapy



Above: MSc Clinical Pharmacy Graduate Valeria Sotgiu

MSc CLINICAL PHARMACY GRADUATION

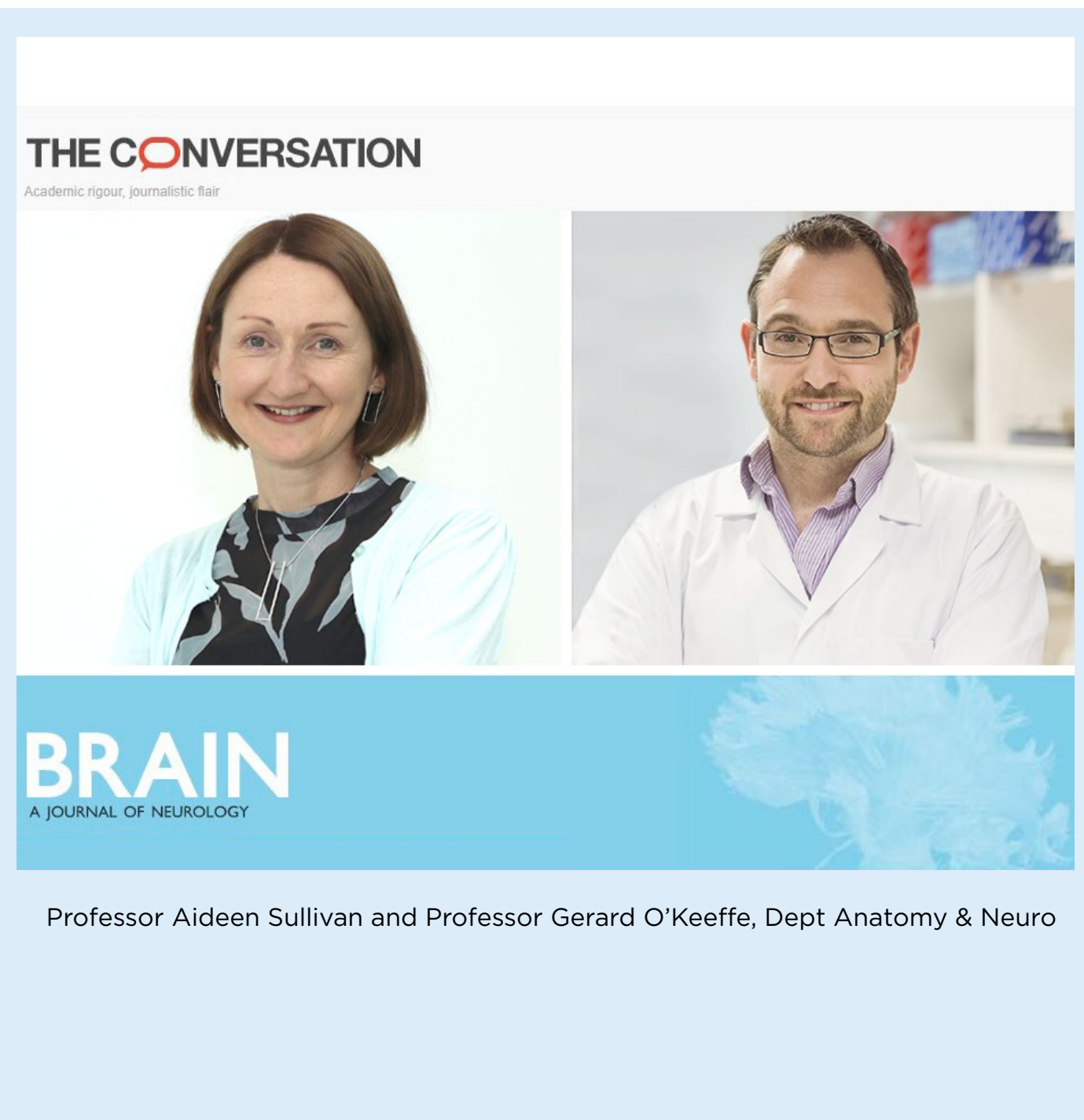
Congratulations to the MSc Clinical Pharmacy Graduates from the School of Pharmacy, who have celebrated their achievement at the Spring Conferring Ceremony, University College Cork, on Monday 15th March 2021.

Ita Fitzgerald received the prize for achieving the highest aggregate score in the programme for class 2018-2020.

The MSc in Clinical Pharmacy is currently accepting applications for the 2021 September intake.

See www.ucc.ie/en/ckx03/ for more information.

O’Keeffe and Sullivan’s ‘BRAIN’ paper shows exciting effect of GDF5 in model of Parkinson’s Disease



THE CONVERSATION
Academic rigour, journalistic flair

BRAIN
A JOURNAL OF NEUROLOGY

Professor Aideen Sullivan and Professor Gerard O’Keeffe, Dept Anatomy & Neuro

Professor Gerard O’Keeffe and Professor Aideen Sullivan’s recent research publication in the prestigious ‘BRAIN’ Journal has been featured in the ‘The Conversation’.

The research paper published in BRAIN entitled ‘Growth differentiation factor 5 exerts neuroprotection in an α -synuclein rat model of Parkinson’s disease’, describes how the GDF5 protein is showing promising results as a new therapy for Parkinson’s disease. In an article in ‘The Conversation’ entitled ‘This brain protein may be key to treating Parkinson’s – study in rats shows’ the authors discuss their work; ‘Parkinson’s disease, a brain disorder that affects over 10 million people worldwide, is caused by the gradual loss of dopamine neurons. The loss of these neurons leads to involuntary tremors, stiffness and balance problems. While there are drugs to treat these symptoms, no drugs exist to slow the progression of the disease. However, we found a brain protein that may be able to prevent the loss of dopamine neurons. This discovery could be important for developing treatments.’

Read the full article [HERE](#): ‘The Conversation’, This brain protein may be key to treating Parkinson’s – study in rats shows.

Growth differentiation factor 5 exerts neuroprotection in an α -synuclein rat model of Parkinson’s disease.

Goulding SR, Concannon RM, Morales-Prieto N, Villalobos-Manriquez F, Clarke G, Collins LM, Lévesque M, Wyatt SL, Sullivan AM, O’Keeffe GW. Brain. 2020 Nov 30:awaa367. doi: 10.1093/brain/awaa367. Online ahead of print. PMID: 33253375 No abstract available.

<https://academic.oup.com/brain/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/brain/awaa367/6012791?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Resounding success for College of Medicine and Health in the 2021 QS World University Rankings

The quality and consistency of the work done in the College of Medicine and Health has been recognised in the 2021 QS World University Rankings.

Life Sciences & Medicine ranked as UCC's strongest field at rank 186th, with an overall score of 69.1. This presents a significant improvement over 2020, when Life Sciences & Medicine at UCC ranked at 207. Dentistry and Nursing also tied with Veterinary Science for the highest percentage of citations per paper in the university.

The QS team analysed over 13.9 million unique papers, producing close to 81 million citations to produce the rankings for this year. 1453 institutions ranked across 51 subjects in 5 subject areas, creating over 16,981 published entries.



Programme of Research into Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill-Mix in Long-Term Residential and Community Settings

A research team from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, led by Professor Jonathan Drennan, have been awarded a research grant of €1 million from the Health Research Board and the Department of Health to undertake a programme of research in nursing home and community settings. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on residents and staff in residential settings, there is an urgent need to identify models of staffing and skill-mix that ensure these settings are safely staffed.

What we do not know at present is how many nurses and healthcare assistants are required to staff these settings and the skills they require to provide care that is safe and of a high quality. This research will identify models that will determine how the number and skill-mix of healthcare staff working in these settings is calculated. Once developed, these staffing models will be implemented and tested in a number of pilot sites by measuring their impact on resident, nurse, organisational and economic outcomes. Following this testing recommendations will be made to

the Department of Health on how to safely staff residential and community settings.

The research is being carried out in partnership with the University of Southampton and The University of Technology Sydney. The research team at University College Cork is Professor Jonathan Drennan (PI), Professor Josephine Hegarty, Dr Vera McCarthy, Dr Nicola Cornally, Professor Corina Naughton, Professor Patricia Leahy-Warren, Dr Helen Mulcahy, Dr Ashling Murphy, Ms Croia Loughnane and Mr Gearoid Kelly (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Dr Aileen Murphy (Cork University Business School).



Left: Professor Jonathan Drennan, Project Lead

INFANT Research Centre, UCC is delighted to announce how a philanthropic donation for the Horgan Chair in Neonatology will mean better outcomes for babies in Ireland



Above (l-r): Professor Geraldine Boylan, Director INFANT Centre, UCC; Professor John O'Halloran, Interim President, UCC; Professor Eugene Dempsey, the new Horgan Chair in Neonatology, Infant Centre, UCC and Consultant Neonatologist at CUMH; Professor Helen Whelton, Head of the College of Medicine and Health, UCC. Photo: Donagh Glavin

INFANT Research Centre, UCC today announced the creation of the first ever Chair in Neonatology after alumnus Daragh Horgan and his wife Anne gave a million euro donation to support the important research ongoing at the INFANT centre. INFANT is Ireland's only dedicated research centre spanning maternal and child health and is focussed entirely on pioneering translational research that will improve outcomes for women, babies and young children. It is a leading health innovation and research hub, headquartered at UCC and co-located in Cork University Maternity Hospital and Cork University Hospital campus.

All babies are shaped by the critical period of pregnancy, birth and the neonatal period (their first 28 days of life). The growth and development of infants is further shaped in a fundamental way by their first 1,000 days of life. The journey from pregnancy through to early life leaves an imprint that shapes health and wellbeing for decades. Most babies are born healthy but for many mothers and babies, there can be severe complications during pregnancy, birth and early infancy. The global and personal impact of this is enormous and is the reason why research into pregnancy, birth and the neonatal period is so vital for society. INFANT is working to address this challenge through research and innovation in maternal and child health, which historically has suffered from serious underinvestment, to deliver better outcomes for all mothers and infants.

The Horgans' sought to support INFANT with a commitment to establish a Chair in Neonatology – the first of its kind in Ireland, based at UCC & CUMH and to support sustained leadership for the neonatal research programme at INFANT. This effort has culminated in the appointment of Prof Eugene Dempsey as the Horgan Chair in Neonatology, following an international search, to secure the research capacity and to deliver on the INFANT vision.

Daragh Horgan said; "Research into paediatric medicine generally is significantly underfunded and so supporting neonatal research at the INFANT centre is incredibly important. We are huge cheerleaders of Professor Boylan and her team and have helped the centre with our support for nearly seven years. Improving care for newborn or pre-term babies is vital: for their longer term outcomes, for the impact it has on their families, and on the cost to society as a whole. INFANT's marriage of research and clinical work under one roof is a powerful combination, which gives the centre a significant advantage. We are delighted that Professor Dempsey will become the new Chair of Neonatology – with

his energy and expertise, we are sure that the team will press home this advantage in making INFANT a world leader in neonatology.”

Professor Eugene Dempsey, the new Horgan Chair in Neonatology, Infant Centre, UCC and Consultant Neonatologist at CUMH, described his priorities for the new role; “This new role represents an exciting opportunity to grow our world leading research programme in newborn care. Over the next 5 years we will continue to develop strong international collaborative links in newborn clinical trials. We will lead and partner in some of these exciting multinational trials all aiming to generate new knowledge and enhance patient outcome. These trials encompass many important aspects of clinical care including newborn stabilisation at delivery, studying antiseizure medication in full-term newborns and measuring brain oxygen levels non-invasively in preterm infants. We will continue to deliver high quality evidence based clinical care to our families. We will also establish a centre for newborn neurocritical care given our research and clinical strength in this area whilst also ensuring that we train the next generation of neonatal academic scientists through close alignment with our undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programs at UCC.”

Professor John O’Halloran, Interim President, UCC added; “This new role is a superb opportunity to further enhance our internationally renowned INFANT Centre at

UCC. On behalf of UCC, we sincerely thank Daragh and Anne Horgan for their generous gift to help create this first ever Chair in Neonatology in Ireland. This is a groundbreaking appointment for Cork and Ireland and highlights the transformative impact that philanthropy can have. This extremely generous gift is of strategic importance in terms of our Alumni and Development programme and, enhances academic and clinical research leadership for UCC nationally and internationally.”

Professor Helen Whelton, Head of the College of Medicine and Health (COMH) UCC commented; “The research undertaken at INFANT Research Centre, UCC has enhanced the outcomes for patients and families in the region. Research active hospitals are characterised by improved patient outcome and as an example, CUMH has seen an improvement in the survival of the extremely preterm infants over the last five years. The generosity of the Horgans in supporting this Chair will add considerable weight to research and teaching in neonatology and enhance the leadership of clinical and translational research at INFANT. This Chair will also support the College’s ambitions in strengthening the academic-clinical innovation capacity between UCC and the HSE.”

The Clinical Director of CUMH, Professor John R. Higgins commented; “Cork University Maternity Hospital is delighted to support

the joint appointment of the first Chair in Neonatology in Ireland at UCC. The ability to unlock innovation potential from the health system and provide the best clinical care for mothers and newborns is driven by high calibre leadership that spans academic and clinical domains. This appointment is a strategic investment in clinical and research capacity and we congratulate Professor Dempsey and acknowledge the significant gift that made this possible.”

Professor Geraldine Boylan, Director INFANT Centre, UCC added; “INFANT is delighted and honoured that Daragh and Anne Horgan have supported our work and our vision through their philanthropic gift to create the first Chair in Neonatology in Ireland here in Cork. Their generosity in creating this Chair will significantly enhance our leadership capacity in neonatal research and help us realise our ambitions to be at the forefront of innovation in maternal and child health translational research. Considering the impact that innovation in this field can potentially have for every child born around the world, this gift truly encapsulates the best of what philanthropy can deliver for societal good. INFANT has a fantastic record of leveraging such awards 5-fold and we will seek to maximise the strategic impact that this generous gift can bring.”



Dr Zubair Kabir shines a light on the School of Public Health with eleven high-impact journal papers published in 2020

Left: Dr Zubair Kabir, Senior Lecturer, Department of Epidemiology & Public Health

Dr Zubair Kabir had a busy year in 2020, with eleven research publications in high-impact international journals in 2020 out of his international collaborative work with the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study team. These include the following:

Nature (one paper)

Mapping routine measles vaccination in low- and middle-income countries

Although progress in the coverage of routine measles vaccination in children in low- and middle-income countries was made during 2000–2019, many countries remain far from the goal of 80% coverage in all districts by 2019. www.nature.com

Nature Medicine (one paper)

Mapping local patterns of childhood overweight and wasting in low- and middle-income countries between 2000 and 2017 | Nature Medicine

Fine-scale geospatial mapping of overweight and wasting (two components of the double burden of malnutrition) in 105 LMICs shows that overweight has increased from 5.2% in 2000 to 6.0% in children ... www.nature.com

Lancet (six papers)

Lancet Respiratory Medicine (one paper) Lancet Global Health (two papers) One Two

In addition, he received more than 11,000 citations in 2020 alone - one of the highest among Irish researchers. His citation impact and field-weighted citation impact (SciVal Analytics) are also one of the highest in Ireland. Dr Kabir also dedicates much of his time to co-ordinating the Master of Public Health on campus and Chairing the School of Public Health Ethics Committee. Dr Kabir is currently leading a work package in a recently 3-million Euros funded Horizon 2020 COVID-19 Rapid Response research grant across 29 EU and non-EU partners - the unCoVer project (<https://uncover-eu.net/>).

unCoVer | Unravelling Data for Rapid Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19

unCoVer is a functional network of partners capable of harvesting real-world data derived from the response and provision of care to patients by the health systems across Europe, and internationally during the COVID-19 pandemic. uncover-eu.net

School of Clinical Therapies collaborates with Trinity College Dublin on DIFA grant

Dr Amr El Refaie and Professor Nicole Müller are Co-Applicants on the project “SENSE-Cog Care: A feasibility study of hearing and vision support to improve quality of life in care home residents with dementia” (DIFA-2020-007). The PI is Professor Iracema Leroi, TCD.

A large majority of nursing home residents with dementia (85% or more) have significant hearing and vision impairments, which are often not detected or adequately addressed. In addition, sensory environments (e.g. background noise levels, room acoustics, lighting levels, visual contrastivity) are often sub-optimal. Sensory impairment paired with sub-optimal sensory environments detract from quality of life, contribute to participation limitations and exacerbate cognitive impairments in dementia.

The objective of this study is to feasibility test a sensory support intervention for people with dementia in residential care. This will involve iterative adaptation of an intervention developed by Professor

Leroi and team (see www.sense-cog.eu) to the Irish residential care context, followed by a feasibility-pilot cluster randomised trial, in preparation for a definitive trial. An additional planned outcome is the foundation of a network of research-ready nursing homes in Ireland, in the area of applied dementia research.

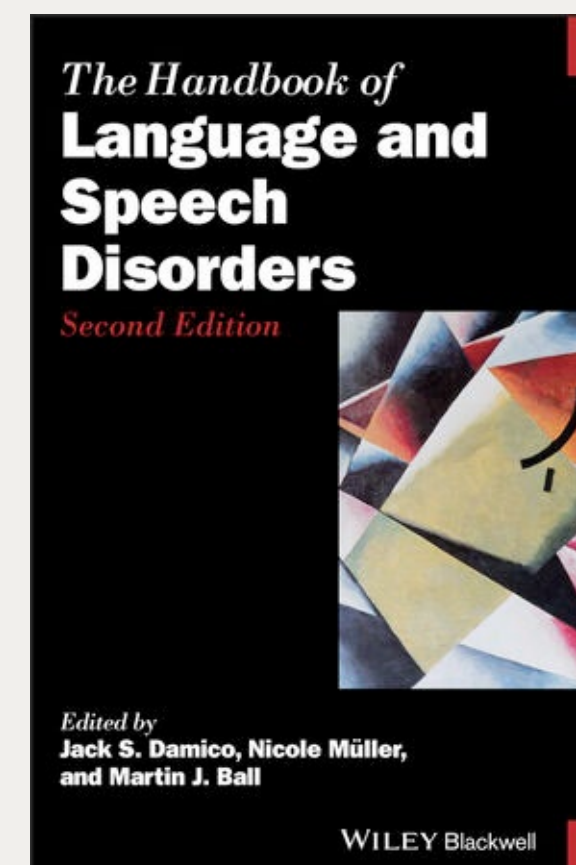
The overarching aim of the Definitive Interventions and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) scheme is to deliver tangible benefits to patients, people’s health and health services. The scheme supports evaluations of full-scale, definitive interventions of any appropriate design. In order to achieve a pipeline of such studies, the scheme supports feasibility studies conducted in preparation for a future definitive intervention. Costs for studies on methodology research (SWATs) within a trial are also eligible for reimbursement.



Second edition of the Handbook of Language and Speech Disorders published

The second edition of the Handbook of Speech and Language Disorders has been published. It provides essential reading for researchers, scholars, practitioners, clinicians and students about diverse topics in Language and Speech Disorders, including literacy and literacy impairments, patterns of normal and disordered language development, hearing impairment and cochlear implants, language acquisition and language delay, dementia, dysarthria, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, genetic syndromes, and many others. This new edition, published by Wiley-Blackwell, features extensively revised and refocused content throughout, reflecting the latest advances in the field.

This is a collaboration between the University of Colorado at Boulder, UCC, and Bangor University and congratulations are in order for the authors Professor Nicole Müller, Professor Jack S Damico, and Professor Martin J. Ball.



BREAKING THE 5K BARRIER FOR A CUP OF TEA IN IRELAND'S FIRST APHASIA HOME CAFÉ



Each year around 7.5k-10k people have a stroke in Ireland. Whilst post-stroke mortality has reduced in Ireland, more people are living with disabilities, for example, around one third of people experience a communication difficulty called Aphasia. Someone with aphasia can experience difficulties understanding what they see or hear, and/or expressing themselves through speech or writing. Society is largely based around communication. Therefore, losing the ability to communicate following stroke results in isolation with reduced opportunities to engage in society generally, as well as enjoying normal everyday activities such as the simple act of going for a cup of tea.

Rachel Boland, then Chair of Clinical Therapies Society, approached Dr Helen Kelly with the idea of setting up an Aphasia Café to create opportunities for this group of people to communicate in a natural social environment, such as a café. Munster's first Aphasia Café was launched in 2017 and has been running from The Haven Café on Bachelors Quay, Cork. As the Haven Café in Cork was already accessible for people with physical difficulties, we trained the staff to be able to communicate with adults with communication difficulties and the students created menus that were easy to read and would be available when they attended the café. Each month speech and language therapy student volunteers would attend the café and chat to the patrons with aphasia and support their communication if needed.

When the Pandemic invaded our everyday lives, with the ensuing social restrictions, people were no longer permitted to meet socially and so an already isolated community became even more isolated. In response, Dr Kelly, with the support of her SLT students, decided to move the Café online and the Aphasia Home Café has now been running every fortnight since April 2020.

The beauty of the online café means that people from across the length and breadth of Ireland have joined as well as people from the UK.

There has also been great interest in the Aphasia Home Café outside of UCC over the past year. Dr Helen Kelly has been interviewed on radio twice about the Café, has given advice to other people wishing to set up equivalent online conversational groups in Ireland and written an article for RTE Brainstorm. In addition, Helen collaborated with some of the patrons with aphasia who attend the Aphasia Home Café, and her speech and language therapy students to create a video for Cork Discovers. The video includes interviews of people with aphasia about their experiences in living with aphasia and they give advice on what people can do to communicate with them better.

When asked why they come to the Aphasia Home Café our patrons with aphasia have said the following:

"I am chatting. I am listening all the time. I am grateful with compassion and friends and colleagues and students all time." (Philip)

"I find it enjoyable because you find a lot of things aren't enjoyable but I always find it enjoyable. Funny topics we discuss and the funny answers to an extent as well." (Eileen)

"Very important that people would communicate with people with the same problem and to learn. You need the fellowship of other people you know." (Paul)

The dedication of the speech and language therapy students is admirable. In particular, they were keen to continue running the Aphasia Home Café over the summer months last year. Attending the Aphasia Café has had a positive impact on the student volunteers. Their interaction with Zoom through the online café has upskilled them for teletherapy which is currently a large

part of their clinical placement during this pandemic. Here are some of the things they said when asked about the professional benefits of attending the café:

"Gives me extra experience working with people online, considering that teletherapy is now going to become more common." (Aishling)

"I feel like I have gained invaluable experience from participating in the Aphasia Café. I have gained confidence in my ability to talk and chat naturally with others who have a communication disorder. I know I have a long way to go but the café gives me the perfect opportunity to practice." (Aoibheann)

"Taking part in the Aphasia Café has given me great experience for working with people with aphasia later in my career." (Lorna)

Healthcare students who volunteer for the Aphasia café can register for UCC's Digital Badge Aphasia Café - Impacting Society by Supporting Adults with Communication Difficulties to Engage in Society in a Café Environment. For more on the Aphasia Café, follow the links below.

Cork Discovers (2020) RTÉ Brainstorm



Dr Harriët Schellekens' research paper features in the New York Post, Fox News and Irish Times

The research paper by Dr Harriët Schellekens and her team in the APC Microbiome Ireland SFI Research Centre, entitled '*Bifidobacterium longum* counters the effects of obesity: Partial successful translation from rodent to human' which was published in the 'Lancet EBioMedicine' journal recently, has attracted quite an amount of media interest, with profiles appearing in The New York Post, Fox News and The Irish Times.

Dr Schellekens and colleagues Professors Cryan and Dinan identified a novel isolated bacterial strain, *Bifidobacterium longum* APC1472, with promising beneficial anti-obesity effects in a preclinical mouse model of high fat diet-induced obesity and in a human cohort of healthy overweight and obese individuals. Noteworthy, the *B. longum* APC1472 was able to reduced fasting blood glucose level, normalise active ghrelin levels and reduce the cortisol awakening response, which are dysregulated in obesity. The interest from the media has been widespread.



Fox News published an article headlined **Scientists say this gut bacteria could help fight 'effects of obesity,' 'stress eating'**

The New York Post article **'Scientists say this gut bacteria could help fight 'effects of obesity''**

The Irish Times article leads, **'Bacteria which can reduce appetite in obese people and ease 'stress eating' is identified'**

Lancet EBioMedicine Research paper: ***Bifidobacterium longum* counters the effects of obesity: Partial successful translation from rodent to human.**

Pictured above (l-r): Dr Harriët Schellekens and colleagues Professor John Cryan and Professor Ted Dinan



School of Pharmacy takes part in *Molecules to Medicines* forum

School of Pharmacy researchers Professor Abina Crean and Dr Piotr Kowalski took part in the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition forum *Molecules to Medicines: Making Vaccines during a Global Pandemic* organised by SSPC-SFI Centre for Pharmaceutical Research. They were joined on the panel by Dr Anne Moore, School of Biochemistry, UCC and Dr Sarah Hudson, University of Limerick. The Q and A moderated by Professor Luke O'Neill Trinity College Dublin and Dr Sarah Hayes, University of Limerick provided insights into vaccine development, regulation, manufacturing and storage.

Listen back to forum [HERE](#) or catch the main points in Irish Times article [HERE](#)

Above: Professor Abina Crean speaking at the event



Applications now open for part-time MSc Hearing, Balance and Communication

The College of Medicine and Health at UCC is delighted to announce that applications are now open for the part-time MSc Hearing, Balance and Communication. It is the only degree of its kind in Ireland and would suit professionals in any scientific, medical or healthcare discipline. Alongside mandatory modules, there are a range of elective modules allowing students to tailor their studies to their own professional and personal interests.

Further information and application details are available at: www.ucc.ie/en/ckx27/

For any queries please contact Ms Kirpa Chandan at: kirpa.chandan@ucc.ie



Final year medical student Patrick Walsh wins ICHAMS National Research Award

Left: Final year medical student Patrick Walsh

On Saturday the 13th of February, final year medical student Patrick Walsh won the International Conference for Healthcare and Medical Students National Research Award for his research on the cost of diabetes. Patrick delivered a five-minute poster presentation to the delegates of the ICHAMS and his work was chosen as the best Irish project presented.

ICHAMS is Ireland's first student-led conference, founded at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) in 2010. The annual international conference is organised by a group of full-time students studying in the healthcare field at RCSI in Dublin, Ireland. This year, the organising committee consisted of 29 members ranging from first to final year students.

The title of Patrick's poster was "Health Service Use and Associated Costs Attributable to Diabetes in The Mitchelstown Cohort Study". The study examines the cost of diabetes among middle-aged Irish adults by estimating the excess health service use (and therefore costs) attributable to those with diabetes among the Mitchelstown Cohort Study. He is being supervised by Professor Patricia Kearney and Dr Kate O'Neill. Previously, Patrick's research was awarded first place at the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland Student Research Awards 2020. His research was also chosen for the community choice award at UCC's New Horizons Research Conference 2020. Patrick now hopes to publish his work and do further research into the cost of diabetes to the healthcare system. We want to wish Patrick the best of luck with his final exams and future career!



Above left: Dr Catherine Gallagher, full-time lecturer and registered specialist in oral surgery. **Above right:** Ms Siobhan Lynch, Dental School and Hospital Manager

Exceptional pandemic work of Dr Catherine Gallagher and Ms Siobhan Lynch acknowledged in Journal of the Irish Dental Association

The exceptional work done by Dr Catherine Gallagher and Ms Siobhan Lynch at the Cork Dental School and Hospital has been acknowledged in the pages of the Journal of the Irish Dental Association. The article highlights their role in meeting student needs while maintaining an emergency clinic in a safe and sustainable manner when the pandemic hit.

Read the full article on page 282 of the journal [HERE](#)

ASSERT Update

by Professor Barry O'Reilly, Consultant
Obstetrician and Gynaecologist



The ASSERT Centre in the College of Medicine and Health, UCC has been very busy over the last year, with various partnerships of note, furthering our aim in improving patient safety and patient outcomes through the application of technology enhanced learning.

CREW Covid-19 Remote Early Warning

We are excited about our partnership with Ballincollig based 8West Consulting in relation to the ongoing development of the CREW (Covid-19 Remote Early Warning) project. CREW was originally developed in 2020, and works by remotely identifying healthcare workers and medics who develop a temperature, a key symptom of Covid-19. Following a successful pilot the HSE are interested in the potential of using technology in quarantine management, such as the monitoring the temperature and movements of travellers arriving in Ireland during the quarantine period.

Digital Health Living Lab

ASSERT has recently been designated with a charter as a Digital Health Living Lab by the HSE Digital Transformation Unit. Digital Health Living Labs provide test beds to accelerate the co-creation and adoption of digital health solutions in Ireland. As part of this partnership, ASSERT will be we will be coordinating a large project on remote patient monitoring covering various clinical themes, including antenatal care.

Fellowship

I am also delighted to welcome Dr Daniel Galvin, Specialist Registrar who recently joined ASSERT under a fellowship programme covering the digitisation of surgery which will have an important future in healthcare training and distance learning. While mainly based at ASSERT, Daniel also spends time working in CUMH.

While Dr Colman Casey retires, the future of HIHI remains bright

Dr Colman Casey retired as National Director of Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI) in January 2021, but not until he had secured funding for the hub to run for another five years.

HIHI was originally established by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health, supported by Enterprise Ireland and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to drive collaboration between the health service and enterprise.

HIHI has been a phenomenal success story in a short period of time, growing from its Cork base to now include offices in Galway and Dublin. The original idea of creating a hub in Cork to drive innovation in healthcare was led by Dr Colman Casey and Professor John R. Higgins back in 2011, following a meeting with government on the subject. They started a pilot in UCC, brought in CIT and partnered with a number of GPs and pharmacies to enable innovative products to have a test drive in healthcare settings.

The hub was well received in Cork and was acknowledged by government as an approach that would benefit healthcare in Ireland as a whole. As a result, tenders for a national healthcare innovation hub were set out and the Cork hub was awarded the national tender in 2015, with funding allocated for five years. The official launch of HIHI took place in September 2016 and the network soon expanded to include

NUIG with the Saolta Group and TCD with Dublin Midlands Hospital Group.

To date 71 projects have been launched into healthcare settings in Ireland. In 2020 in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, HIHI launched a COVID-19 solutions portal to source solutions to the demands of the pandemic. Dr Casey pointed to the following as great examples of innovations that have been launched into maternity hospitals, with the help of Health Innovation Hub Ireland, both before and during the pandemic.

- **Bensons Workwear:** When the pandemic hit, this Cork-based clothing manufacturer, diversified its product in order to respond to COVID-19 and government requests and began manufacturing high quality medical garments. Bensons Healthcare now exists to produce disposable surgical gowns, disposable aprons, sterile surgical gowns and more. A great example of HIHI enabling an Irish company to produce PPE to frontline staff, reducing Ireland's reliance on imports for these products.

- **Yellow Schedule:** This Limerick based software developer successfully launched its tech solution to safely and easily schedule hospital visits in South Infirmary Victoria Hospital (SIVUH) in October 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The solution is to launch in Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH) in 2021 once restrictions ease.

- **3FiveTwo Healthcare:** In 2019, CUMH successfully piloted an online outpatient booking system delivered by this innovative Belfast company. The system allowed patients to choose their own appointment time from a list and led to the DNA rate reducing from 27% to 3% and had a positive impact on patient satisfaction.

- **ViClarity:** ViClarity completed a pilot test of their audit, risk and compliance reporting software in CUMH in 2018 with the help of HIHI. The objective was to automate and streamline the process and collection of the national reporting requirements of the Maternity Patient Safety Statement (MPSS) and Irish Maternity Indicator System (IMIS) metrics. The purpose was to improve efficiency, reduce clerical error and provide senior management with oversight of hospital activities. The pilot project was a directorate wide success, with all four sites supporting the use of the software program. The ViClarity software is in the process of being rolled out across Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate.

In mid-January 2021, Dr Colman Casey announced that funding for Phase 2 of HIHI was approved by the Enterprise Ireland Board, securing HIHI activities for the next 5 years. He stated:

“None of this would have been possible without a team of dedicated professionals who generously gave of their time and galvanised people

to recognise and accept change. This team delivered for enterprise and healthcare and will continue to do so. This team was also prepared to roll up their sleeves in the middle of a health crisis in Ireland and put their minds to a plan for increasing Ireland's chances in providing better healthcare for our citizens in the future.”

Commenting on Dr Casey's retirement, Professor John R. Higgins, Clinical Director Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate and Principal Investigator of HIHI said:

“It has been a privilege to work closely with Dr Colman Casey for over 10 years with a view to promoting and facilitating healthcare innovation within our Irish healthcare system. As Director of Healthcare Innovation Hub Ireland, Dr Casey has overseen significant and tangible innovation within Irish healthcare while also contributing to national business growth. We wish him a long and happy retirement.”



Above: Dr Colman Casey, former National Director of Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI)

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE PRIZEGIVING CEREMONY 2020



THE ANNUAL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE PRIZE-GIVING CEREMONY TOOK PLACE VIRTUALLY ON FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER 2020.

The Dean of the School, Professor Paula O’Leary was delighted to welcome the prize winners, and the students who had other notable achievements, along with their guests, and faculty of the School of Medicine to the online Ceremony. Professor O’Leary pointed out that discipline, commitment, effort, resilience and passion underpin the characteristics required to excel in healthcare and medical science. The events of 2020 have provided clear example of the universal importance and value of those characteristics in a year that has positioned healthcare and medical science front and centre in terms of world priorities. The School places high value in the demonstration of excellence and commitment to academic achievement as evidenced by the many prizes that were awarded across the range of specialties and disciplines.

The Dean was also keen to point out the relevance of student group activities and societies, and the importance of pursuits beyond core curriculum, through student and community initiatives, arts and sport, and their roles in enhancing lives, especially at a time like the present also needed to be acknowledged.

Professor O’Leary made special mention of those students who are far from home at this time. She hoped this virtual ceremony allowed their family and friends to join all in the School of Medicine for this important occasion.

Before proceeding to announcing the winners in the various categories the Dean closed by saying “I continue to be impressed and proud of you our students, and especially so in this year. Our most recent graduates have completed their undergraduate education and have entered the medical workforce at a time like no other in living memory. We celebrate all of your achievements and trust you will value the recognition which you rightly deserve.”

The following prizes were presented to the successful recipients in recognition of their outstanding achievements in the 2019/2020 academic year:

Name	Prize(s)
Samin Abrar	Certificate in Foundations in Medicine AnatBioPhys Year 1 2019/2020 and Joint winner-Edward Gurr Prize 2019/2020.
Ellen K Atkinson	James M O’Donovan Medical Prize 2019/2020.
Sean Barber	Dr B. Foley Medal in Microbiology 2019/2020.
Julie R A Beshara	Charles Medal-Anatomy, the Dr Kay (Kate) Flynn Memorial Medal in Physiology and the Prize in Foundations in Medicine AnatBioPhys Year 1 for 2019/2020.
Emma Birchall	2020 Dr Pamela Gilligan Prize.
Amy Brennan	Archer Gold Medal in Psychiatry 2019/2020.
Ailbhe Brennan	2020 Dr Derek McCoy Medal.
Taylor Carmichael	Charles Donovan Prize in Dermatology 2019/2020.
Jiahong Cedric Chua	RGG Barry Prize in Paediatrics 2019/2020.
John M Collins	2019/2020 MacConaill Prize in Clinical Anatomy and the Certificate in Foundations in Medicine AnatBioPhys Year 2.
Carl J Fisher	Graduate Entry Medicine First Year Prize 2019/2020.
Sinead M Forde	Gaffney Prize 2019/2020.
Colm Hannon	Blayney Prize 2019/2020.
Roisín A Harrington	Graduate Entry Medicine Second Year Prize 2019/2020.
Thomas J D Harty	Gold Medal in Radiology 2019/2020.
Aisling Holland	Aodán Ó Donnchadha Memorial Prize 2019/2020.
Louise Anne Howe	British Pharmacological Society Prize for Clinical Pharmacology and the Pathology Undergraduate Medal for 2019/2020
David Gerard Kennedy	Edward Gurr Prize (Medical Students) 2019/2020 - Joint winner.
Hannah M Keohane	2019/2020 Prize in Foundations in Medicine AnatBioPhys Year 2
Bryant Lim Po-Yuen	MacConaill Prize 2019/2020.
Oisín Ó Murchú	2019/2020 Dr Timothy O’Toole Medal in General Practice and Joint Winner-John Kelly Prize in Clinical Surgery.
Gavin D O’Connor	Dr Niamh Long MPS Memorial Medal 2019/2020.
Dylan O’Donovan	Pathology Graduate Entry to Medicine Medal 2019/2020.
Miracle Grace Ong	TheaPamex - UCC Prize in Ophthalmology 2019/2020.
Jelena Popov	Graduate Entry Medicine Second Year Certificate 2019/2020.
Ethan M P Shamis	Graduate Entry Medicine First Year Certificate 2019/2020.
Maha SAJ Shehab	Edward Gurr Prize (Medical Students) 2019/2020 - Joint winner.
Ryan Sless	2019/2020 Pearson Medal and Joint Winner-John Kelly Prize in Clinical Surgery.
Clara Steele	2019/2020 Dr John Beausang Prize.

Following the formal presentation of the Prizes the Dean acknowledged the many students who had significant achievements in areas of Research, contribution to Medical student societies and a range of other academic and cultural areas.

Name	Prize(s)
Hazel Murphy	Radiography: Highest Overall Mark, the Highest Mark in Physics, the Highest Mark in Research and the IIRRT Olive Fleming memorial medal
Aisling O'Leary	Radiography: Highest mark in Professional Practice of Radiography Subjects
Sarah Coakley	Radiography: Highest Mark in First year
Louise Howe	Health Research Board Summer Student Scholarship
Fiona Brady	Health Research Board Summer Student Scholarship
Samuel Keogh	Health Research Board Summer Student Scholarship
Fionn Woulfe	Health Research Board Summer Student Scholarship
Ciara O'Donoghue	2020 UCC College of Medicine and Health SURE Bursary
Eimear O'Shaughnessy	2020 UCC College of Medicine and Health SURE Bursary
Antoin Stanton	2020 UCC College of Medicine and Health SURE Bursary
Surgeon Noonan Society	Club/Society of the Year at the SAAI 2020 Awards Ceremony and Best Green Initiative at the BICS 2020 Ceremony.
Kelly Hiu Ying Choy	UCC Bene Merenti for contribution to AMSI
Aoife Golden	UCC STAR award for contribution to MedSoc
Natalie Krakoski	UCC STAR award for contribution to Emergency Care Society
David O'Keefe	UCC Best Individual Award for contribution as Vice-Chair, Surgeon Noonan 19/20
Clodagh Woods	UCC Bene Merenti for Contribution as Surgeon Noonan, Chairperson 19/20
Aoife Feeley	2019 RCSI Fielding Medal for best final year student project
Sinead Flanagan	Rose of Tralee 2019
Colm Hannon	2020 RCPI Reuben Harvey Prize - UCC winner
Haleeda Hilmi	Oral presentation winner at Royal Academy for Medicine Ireland, Intern Section Study Day Meeting, 2020
Hannah Keohane	2020/2021 Quercus University Academic Scholarship
Anita Lucey	RCGP Sheppard Memorial Essay 2020 Prize
Mario Rotundo and Darek Sokol-Randall	Joint winners of the Professor Moira O'Brien Medal for best oral presentation at RCSI, Faculty of Sport & Exercise Medicine 2019 conference
Brian Traynor	Oral presentation winner at Royal Academy for Medicine Ireland, Intern Section Study Day Meeting, 2020
UCC Sim Wars team (Ryan Sless, Nathaniel Hayward, Tommy Kirkham, Shawn Albers, and Niki Tellios)	Reached Sim Wars Final at 2019 Association for Simulation Practice in Healthcare meeting.



Before bringing the event to a close, Professor O'Leary congratulated the students (listed below) who had performed so well in the 2020 Dr HHS Medical Scholarships and Prizes. Students from six institutions on the island of Ireland compete in this prestigious, national competition. This year the School of Medicine at UCC had another outstanding performance winning a total of 12 awards.

2020 Dr HH Stewart Medical Scholarships and Prizes	
Ali Abdulghani Binabdi	2nd Prize in Medical Microbiology
Colm Hannon	Scholarship in Medicine
Thomas Harty	3rd Prize in Surgery
Catherine Henry	2nd Prize in Clinical Radiology
Rory Holohan	Scholarship in Ophthalmology
Bryant Lim Po-Yuen	Scholarship in Biochemistry
Conor Murray	Scholarship in Anaesthesia
Eilís Margaret Ní Chinnéide	2nd Prize in Psychiatry
Eoghan Ó Buachalla	3rd Prize in Physiology
Dylan O'Donovan	Scholarship in Pathology
Grainne O'Mahony	Scholarship in Public Health
Poh Yu Hui	3rd Prize in Pharmacology

Congratulations to these students who excelled in both Medical Science and Clinical disciplines. On behalf of the School, Professor O'Leary was delighted the Ceremony provided an opportunity to acknowledge their success.

The School of Medicine 2020 Prizegiving Ceremony can be viewed in full [HERE](#)



MSc in Pharmaceutical Technology and Quality Systems graduate Justin Debattista reflects on his time at UCC

Left: MSc in Pharmaceutical Technology and Quality Systems graduate Justin Debattista

My name is Justin Debattista. I am very grateful that after all the sacrifices we made, we are still able to graduate, even though we all envisioned this day to be quite different.

Back in 2014, I had completed my BSc in Chemistry and Biology from the University of Malta. After a two-month internship in Germany I returned to Malta and I started working for Aurobindo, one of the leading, generic pharmaceutical companies worldwide. My first role was as a QC analyst and after one year and a half I was promoted to the post of team leader where I served for four years and a half. It was during this time that I decided to further my knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry by applying for a master's degree.

The distance learning MSc in Pharmaceutical Technology and Quality Systems offered by UCC immediately stood out when analysing my options as I could complete it whilst still working full time in Malta. The course covers many modules relevant to the pharmaceutical industry. One particular aspect of the course setup that I really liked were the campus-based workshops which

ran at the end of each term for 3 days. These workshops gave me an opportunity to meet my fellow students and get a hands-on experience of the varying sectors of the industry. These workshops also gave me the opportunity to travel to Ireland and experience the university experience on campus.

I am graduating with 1st class honours in MSc Pharmaceutical Technology and Quality Systems. This course is accepted by the Malta Medicines Authority as meeting the educational requirements to register as a QP in Malta and this is something that I wish to pursue in the future. The knowledge gained from this course has enabled me to apply for and work in a new position within my company, that of a Regulatory Compliance Officer within the QA department. This post is allowing me to gain experience in the regulatory sector of the pharmaceutical industry, which is very extensive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wife Jessica, our families, friends and fellow graduates without whom this journey wouldn't have been possible.

AUDIOLOGY TEAM ESTABLISHES LINKS WITH ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY

The Audiology Team in the School of Clinical Therapies are establishing collaborations with the Estonian Academy of Audiology and with MTÜ Audiere, a non-profit organisation supporting Audiology services and education in Estonia. Hearing services and the lack of hearing specialists in Estonia were the topic of a discussion in the Social Affairs Committee of the Estonian Parliament on 11th March, to mark World Hearing Day, where Anne Maisvee of MTÜ Audiere reported their latest news that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between UCC and MTÜ Audiere, and their intention to sponsor an Audiology student to start at UCC in the autumn. Watch a recording of the discussion [HERE](#), at approx. 32:42.



SPHeRE Network 7th Annual Conference: The Value of Research and Evidence in a Crisis

The SPHeRE Network 7th Annual Conference on *The Value of Research and Evidence in a Crisis* took place on 23rd February over a half day.

Dr Josep Figueras, the Director and cofounder of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies delivered a Keynote Presentation on *Bringing Evidence to Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic* which highlighted the importance of evidence and effective knowledge brokering.

The first session on *Original Research Relating to the Current Pandemic* included a talk by SPHeRE Scholar Viveka Guzmán on associations of mental health and wellbeing with the natural and built environment and how important the environment is in dealing with the negative effects of COVID-19. Noreen O’Leary spoke about COVID-19 policies impacting healthcare delivery and healthcare staff in Ireland. SPHeRE Scholar Dr Aoife Fleming closed this session by discussing a mixed methods study investigating the impact of COVID-19 on community pharmacy practice and pharmacist wellbeing.

The second session on *General Research* included a study by Dr Stefania Castello on the results of a pilot randomised controlled trial of a community-based smoking cessation intervention for disadvantaged women in Ireland. SPHeRE Scholar Louise Foley delivered a presentation on a qualitative study of medication adherence among people living with multimorbidity, showing that one condition is often prioritised which may


have implications for medication adherence. Oluwadamilola Alokun spoke about tobacco control among prisoners in Western Europe; a systematic review and meta-analysis, which showed that very few countries have tobacco control policies in place. SPHeRE Scholar David McEvoy presented on methods of self-harm and times of attendance at emergency departments: A comparison in children, teenagers, young adults and adults using the National Self-Harm Registry of Ireland (NSHRI) database. This study concluded that understanding the age-specific epidemiology of self-harm will allow health researchers and public health experts to design and implement targeted programmes to reduce its burden in our societies.

The third session was on *Evidence Synthesis Related to the Current Pandemic*. Dr Laura Comber presented a rapid review on alternative clinical specimens for the detection of SARS-CoV-2. SPHeRE Scholar Dr Kieran Walsh spoke about a rapid review conducted on the duration of infectiousness of individuals infected with SARS-CoV-2. SPHeRE Scholar James Larkin closed this session by discussing a synthesis of internationally published guidance for residential care facilities in the context of COVID-19.

The final Keynote session on *Use of Evidence to Inform Policy in a Rapid Context* featured a presentation by Professor Susan Smith, Professor of Primary Care Medicine at RCSI, on Evidence to Support Public Health Policy and Frontline Clinicians in a Health Crisis. This was followed

by Dr John Cuddihy, Director of the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, who spoke on the topic of Information for Action in Pandemic Response. The last presentation was by Professor Pete Lunn, Founder and Head of the Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), ESRI, who talked about the importance of Understanding the Behavioural Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Recordings of the presentations can be found on the SPHeRE Website [HERE](#)



CONCLUSION

- High prevalence of tobacco use among prisoners was observed higher among males
- Overall, the findings of this study can be used to make gender specific quality informed decision making to policy makers towards enhancing tobacco control policies among prisoners .
- Very few countries in Western Europe have tobacco control policy in place which showed some proven effectiveness in reducing smoking prevalence.
- Therefore, serious considerations of comprehensive tobacco control policies in prisons across Western European nations may be necessary.

Above: Oluwadamilola Alokun speaking about about tobacco control among prisoners in Western Europe

The Medical Education Unit hosts a seminar on Online Assessment in Health Professions' Education: Opportunities and Challenges

The Medical Education Unit (MEU) hosted a seminar on online assessment, which was part of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Seminar Series. The organising committee included Dr Deirdre Bennett, Dr Helen Hynes, Dr Aislinn Joy, Mr Kieran Nee and Dr Catherine Sweeney.

The past year has seen a huge increase in the number of online assessments performed across all third level institutions. The rapid move to online assessment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for both students and teachers, particularly in the area of health professions' education, where assessment often involved practical and workplace-based assessment. However, there have also been opportunities presented to review traditional approaches and develop some new and possibly better methods of assessments.

Over 60 educators from across the Irish universities and a wide range of health professions attended the online seminar, which included a mix of presentations, small group discussions and a panel discussion.

Professor Denise Whitelock from the Open University, who has been researching in the area of secure online assessment and the use of AI for 25 years, was the keynote speaker. Her address was followed by short presentations on a range of online/digital assessment initiatives in health professions' education from UCC, UL and UCD. Both faculty and student perspectives were presented. Initiatives included:

Proctored Online OSCEs (Dr Kieran Doherty, St Vincent's University Hospital and Mr Khalid Munir, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital)

Online Assessment of Clinical Reasoning (Dr Helena McKeague, UL)

The use of recordings of procedures for learning and assessing skills (Drs Helen Hynes and Rob Gaffney, MEU and Clodagh Woods and Kate O'Donovan, UCC final year medical students)

The use of podcasts for assessment of postgraduate nursing students (Dr Sile Creedon, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Ms Mary Fitzmaurice, CUH and postgraduate UCC student, Mr Kieran Hurley, Radio station manager, UCC)

It is planned that a special interest group will be formed in this area. Anyone who wishes to be involved in this group can contact Catherine Sweeney (c.sweeney@ucc.ie)



Above: A screen shot from the panel discussion. Clockwise from top left: Dr Teresa Barbosa, School of Pharmacy, UCC, Dr Deirdre Bennett, Medical Education Unit, UCC, Dr Sile Creedon, School of Nursing and Midwifery, UCC, Dr Kieran Doherty, St Vincent's University Hospital, Dr Helena McKeague, University of Limerick, Dr Helen Hynes, Medical Education Unit, UCC

Dentistry student Fiachra Ó Corragain highlights how St Patrick's ancient prayer resonates with lockdown life in 2021

Echoing within an ancient Irish prayer from the 700s, the recurring words 'I arise today' (atomriug indiu), resonate profoundly in 2021; a time when getting out of bed and facing another day in lockdown is a challenge and a victory in itself.

Attributed to St. Patrick, Lorica Sancti Patricii, St. Patrick's Breastplate, is one of Ireland's oldest surviving pieces of literature. In the Lorica's famous verses, St. Patrick prays for divine strength and protection to surround him: 'Christ beside me, Christ before me... Christ in the heart of every person who thinks of me'.

Cork composer, recording artist, and second-year Dentistry student Dr Fiachra Ó Corragáin, has created a new musical work comprising four sections of Lorica Sancti Patricii that will debut for St. Patrick's Day 2021. Fiachra is also a renowned harp player who has composed and performed music for Prince Charles and has amassed four million views of his Irish music recordings online. Fiachra says, "I was struck by the relevance of the lyrics, and how broadly the Lorica's words may be interpreted, regardless of religion, faith system, or lack thereof."

The work is a collaboration with Old-Irish specialist, Dr Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh of University College Cork's Roinn na Sean- agus Mean-Ghaeilge (Department of Old and Middle Irish). Dr Caitríona's expertise facilitated approximate pronunciations and the conservation of the Lorica's unique and ever-changing meter. The irregularity of the Lorica's meter more closely resembles a spell text rather than a Christian hymn.

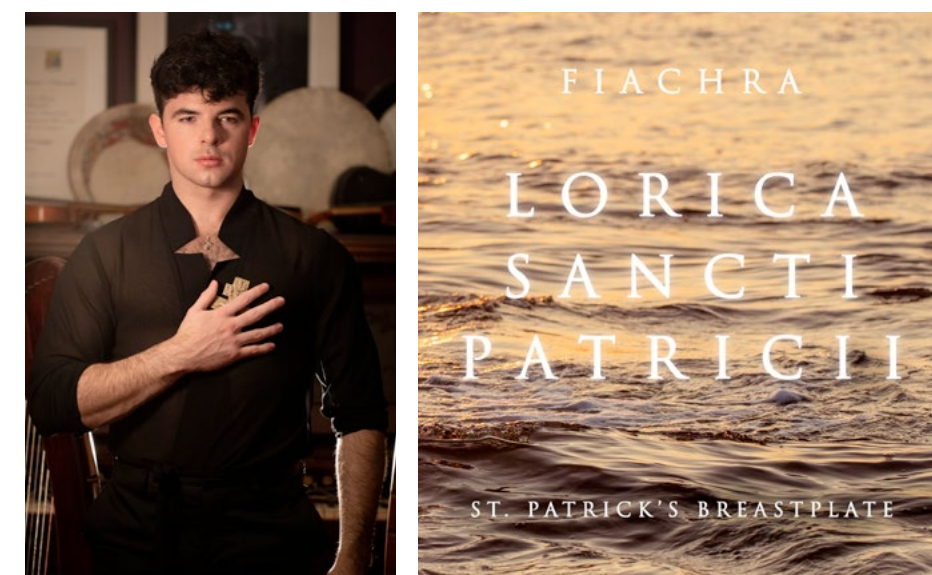
Fiachra's work opens with the Lorica's section about nature: 'I arise today through the strength of heaven... the depth of the sea... the firmness of earth'. The speaker draws strength from the natural world. The music moves into the most famous verse of St. Patrick's breastplate: 'Christ beside me, Christ before me...' The speaker then proclaims the mighty strength of the Trinity and the belief of oneness within threeness, evoking St. Patrick's famed association with the three-leaved shamrock. The piece ends with a Latin prayer verse.

Fiachra says, "It is often in the hard times of life that our faith comes to the fore. St Patrick's entreaty for divine armour to shield him, strengthen him, transcends the millennium and many centuries since its composition. St. Patrick's words are personal, seeking Christ's direct presence around him, and in the people he encounters throughout his life. In times of sorrow, anxiety, and hardship, I believe it is a universal human experience to search for the strength to make it through the next day, hour, minute, second. This search could manifest in a plea to a divine power, to the universe, or to one's own self. In St. Patrick's calls to Christ, to the natural world, and in his first-person proclamations, the Lorica embodies all three.

As individuals, communities, countries, and as a planet, we must hold on to hope and faith that brighter days are ahead. We must find the strength to keep going, as St. Patrick did throughout the many adversities of his life, and know that our sacrifices are in the name of good.

As we approach a more contemplative, introspective St. Patrick's Day than perhaps ever before in modern history, my hope with this recording is to inspire a moment of peace and calm in the listener. It is astounding to know that the Old-Irish words I am singing were committed to text in the 700s. I am humbled and honoured to contribute to the special lineage of this beautiful, beloved prayer. I am grateful to Old-Irish specialist, Dr Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh of UCC, for collaborating with me on this project."

Fiachra's Lorica Sancti Patricii (St. Patrick's Breastplate) is available on Spotify and all online music platforms. A lyric video with translations is available on Fiachra's YouTube channel, FiachraHarp: <https://youtu.be/Saom2NZ0bhM>.



Above: Fiachra Ó Corragain



First year Dental students create soap sculptures at home to hone hand-eye co-ordination skills

COVID-19 has challenged every aspect of education, what we do and how we do it. However, as we know with every challenge comes opportunity and so it was for practical engagement with the First Year in Dentistry students. Although, working remotely students were encouraged to start developing and honing their hand eye coordination skills. Students were asked to carve from soap shapes and items of interest.

The submissions were so inspiring that Dr Fiona MacSweeney put together this short video, to share the soap carvings. The School hopes that you will enjoy the carvings and wish their students well in their ongoing studies, creativity, and resilience.

Click **HERE** to check out the sculptures!

Reflect Recover Renew Team Resources – Making Sense of Rapid Emergent Change

Organisation Development - Improving Change Capacity has developed a Team Reflection on Change module to assist teams to acknowledge and make sense of the rapid and emergent change experienced in recent times.

The guidance assists teams to engage in a process to Reflect, Recover and Renew and consider the impact of COVID-19 on staff, service delivery and work practices.

This is an important part of the organisational recovery process which will be different for each team/service.

- Take time with colleagues to pause and reflect
- Consider the learning and make sense of your experiences
- Identify what individual and team supports are needed
- Plan for how services can be resumed or redesigned
- Consider how new practices can be implemented
- Build on new relationships to sustain improvements

The resources are all available on the Change Guide section of the HSE website click [HERE](#)

1. Guidance video on the purpose of Reflect Recover Renew, outlining the tools teams can use to support them through the process. The video is aimed at team members who would

like to facilitate a session with colleagues and it can also be used by individual staff members.

2. A pre-prepared power point presentation for use when facilitating a team session. This has been designed with helpful presenter notes built in.
3. **Template (6.5.1) Reflect Recover Renew – Making Sense of Rapid Emergent Change** which is intended to support teams to consider what has changed, what we have learned from our COVID-19 experiences and what actions are needed. The template is further supported by the infographics (*Reflect Recover Renew Resources*) which are aligned to the Health Services Change Guide

For further enquiries or to request a hard copy of the Change Guide please contact changeguide@hse.ie or follow us on twitter [@HSEchange_guide](https://twitter.com/HSEchange_guide).





Above (l-r): Maria O’Sullivan (Final year Medicine), Ciara Kenny (Pharmacy MPharm4), Katie Cody (Pharmacy MPharm4) and Aisling Reid (MSc Physiotherapy)

NATIONAL HEALTH FUSION TEAM CHALLENGE

Four students from the College of Medicine and Health recently represented UCC at the National Health Fusion Team Challenge competition which was hosted online by the University of Limerick, Health Sciences Academy on 24th March. This is an annual, intervarsity challenge where an interprofessional team of students present a patient management plan that they have developed collaboratively.

The UCC student team were: Maria O’Sullivan (Final year Medicine), Ciara Kenny (Pharmacy MPharm4), Katie Cody (Pharmacy

MPharm4) and Aisling Reid (MSc Physiotherapy). The team were commended on their energising presentation which demonstrated a clear understanding of the contribution of a multidisciplinary healthcare professional approach to the care of a patient with gestational diabetes. The team was mentored by Dr Aoife Fleming, School of Pharmacy and supported by the Department of Physiotherapy and School of Medicine.

For more information see: www.ul.ie/hsa/2021-healthfusion-team-challenge

School of Pharmacy and APC Microbiome Ireland engaged in an online workshop with secondary school teachers on the topic of Antibiotics and Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Dr Teresa Barbosa from the School of Pharmacy and Dr Aimee Stapleton and Dr Cara Hueston from APC Microbiome Ireland were delighted to participate in the STE(A)M in Junior Cycle 2021 CPD Calendar programme by facilitating an online workshop for secondary school teachers on Monday, 22nd March 2021, developed as part of the new STEAM curriculum Junior Cycle for Teachers. The aim of these workshops is to provide professional learning for Junior Cycle teachers with an interest in using societal challenges as a stimulus to engage within and across subject areas.

‘This was a brilliant workshop that really would enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.’

‘Definitely more aware of the need to promote the safe and correct

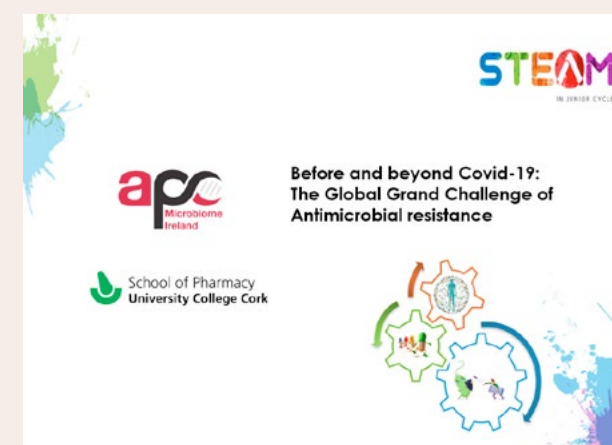
use of antibiotics, if the younger generation are not made aware then no change can happen.’

‘Super workshop.’

‘Made me more aware of microbial resistance and how education plays a key role.’

Well done to the JCT team for coordinating such a fantastic STE(A)M engagement programme!

For more information click [HERE](#)





CRF-C Recent Recruitment Highlights

Pictured left (l-r): Some of the CRF-C team in CUH – Amy Stone, June Considine, Ann Marie O’Callaghan, Lisa McSweeney, Jean Foley, Deirdre Flynn and Aisling Murphy

The CRF-C continue to deliver top recruitment numbers for some key international clinical trials. Some recent highlights are:

Recently NEJM published trial, ADVOCATE, CRF-C , working with Dr Mike Clarkson , CUH were the 5th highest recruiting site in Europe and 6th highest recruitment site globally out of approximately 206 activated site worldwide.

Working in collaboration with Dr Juan Trujillio from the INFANT research centre, CUH were the first European site to open, CUH are currently in the top 4 recruiting sites globally and are the highest recruiting site in Europe for the EPOPEX paediatric study. EPITOPE, a study looking at the safety of Viaskin Peanut in peanut allergic young children, the CRF-C recruited on target despite the COVID-19 Pandemic, were the first European site to open and are currently in the top 5 recruiting sites globally.

CUH were the first site in Europe to recruit patients into the ERMES haematology study

which is sponsored by Novartis, working with Dr Vitaliy Mykytiv. The first patient was enrolled just 4 days following official study site opening in March 2021.

The Cork COVID-19 COHORT was formed by UCC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following identification of the first COVID-19 positive patients in Ireland (March 2020), UCC researchers formed the research cluster in order to more effectively gather detailed information on the virus itself and on patient outcomes and experiences, in accordance with global research priorities identified by WHO. The CRF-C , working in collaboration with APC, currently have 56 patients enrolled to this study and are continuing to actively recruit during the pandemic.

Working with Dr Corinna Sadlier and Dr Stephen O’Riordan, the CRF-C recruited 503 healthcare staff from Cork hospitals to the Epidemiology of SARs COV-2 study in health care workers during early stages of the pandemic.

The School of Pharmacy to host annual PECNET Practice Education Conference



THE EVOLUTION OF PRACTICE EDUCATION: SHARING THE LEARNING. 17TH JUNE 2021

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- o Professor David Boud, Deakin University:
 - A new perspective on feedback
- o Professor Zubin Austin, University of Toronto:
 - Enhancing Resilience in Practice Education

A Virtual Conference:
For all involved in Practice Education

In association with:



For registration click **HERE**

Mercy University Hospital

Upper GI video capsule examination enables quick responses at the Mercy University Hospital gastrointestinal unit

The GI function Lab at the Mercy University Hospital (MUH) is one of the largest in Europe with a medical director (Dr Martin Buckley), 4 GI Physiologists (Lucy Quinlivan - Chief GI Physiologist, Julie O'Neill and Aidan Kaar - Trainee GI Physiologists and Lorraine Nolan - GI Lab Aide) and a clerical coordinator (Catherine Bennett).

The lab provides a full array of GI physiology investigations including oesophageal and anorectal function testing, SIBO, Lactose and Fructose intolerance breath testing and Small Bowel Video capsule examinations. The lab also runs an extensive clinical research program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented change in our healthcare systems. The speciality of gastroenterology within Mercy University Hospital Cork was faced with the deferral of many routine and surveillance endoscopies as the focus was redirected to urgent care. Stringent restrictions and measures for endoscopy procedures were put in place, which aimed to protect patients and healthcare professionals from uncontrolled exposure. The HSE guidance document for safe endoscopy in pandemic conditions recommended that alternative non-invasive investigations be considered for all non-urgent referrals for endoscopy.

As a response to these restrictions and increasing waiting lists during the first lockdown the GI Lab at the Mercy introduced a new technique to examine the oesophagus, stomach and duodenum - the Upper GI Video capsule examination. During this new procedure the patients merely swallows a small capsule with cameras as both ends. These cameras transmit the images to a screen in the GI Lab or to a recorder that the patient wears. The entire procedure is performed in the GI lab over an hour and there is no need for hospital beds or patient sedation. The procedure is not aerosol generating.

This technology was rapidly and successfully introduced as an alternative diagnostic tool during the COVID-19 pandemic to help tackle the increasing waiting list for gastroscopy at our unit.

Throughout the pandemic in MUH we have seen that the PillCam UGI achieves excellent views of the upper GI tract. In selective cases it is a safe alternative to gastroscopy and has helped to significantly reduce gastroscopy waiting times.

During the third lockdown the GI lab has introduced a Colon video capsule test as an alternative to Colonoscopy.



Pictured above: Front (l-r): Aidan Kaar, Dr Mary Nwaezeigwe, Lucy Quinlivan. Back (l-r): Lorraine Nolan, Dr Anne Fennessy, Dr John O'Grady, Dr Martin Buckley

Cork University Maternity Hospital

CUMH: Responding to the shadow pandemic

by Ann-Marie McCarthy, Social Work Team Leader and Domestic Violence Committee Chair, CUMH



Above: Ann-Marie McCarthy, Social Work Team Leader and Domestic Violence Committee Chair, CUMH

It is almost one full year since COVID-19 came into our lives. A year fraught with struggles, anxiety and a crisis our healthcare system has never seen before. Parallel to all of this, the lockdowns, the home schooling and banana bread, there is what the UN has called the 'shadow pandemic'.

The pandemic has brought with it a dramatic rise in cases of domestic violence (DV) as women and children have been locked down with their abusers and separated from their support networks. Women and families are under more stress than ever before. People have lost their jobs, been forced to work from home,

children have been unable to go to school, sales of alcohol have soared and stress levels in households are at an all-time high.

The UN reported a 20% increase in domestic violence cases in 2020. In August 2020 Women's Aid Ireland reported a 43% increase in calls from the same period in 2019 and 71% increase in traffic to their website. In June 2020, Gardai reported that nationally they received 25% more calls in 2020 than for the same period in 2019.

It is well documented that domestic violence can commence or escalate in pregnancy which is why we have a dedicated DV committee in CUMH that focuses on education, training, policy to meet the needs of pregnant women experiencing domestic violence.

The CUMH DV Committee and the Social Work Department decided it was really important to change our ways of working in order to respond to the challenges associated with COVID-19. Our DV policy has been updated and women who have their booking assessment over the phone are screened in person at their next antenatal clinic appointment.

As part of the 16 days of Action (an international campaign to end domestic violence) at the end of 2020, we developed a short video to include

a wide range of staff to send a very important message to our patients. **We are still here. We will listen to you. We will believe you. We will support you.**

The video was shot by our UCC Social Work student Laura Bateman and put together by a digital designer who did the work 'pro bono'. It was a fantastic way to get staff from all different departments to really engage with the topic of domestic violence and make a verbal commitment to support any patient who is experiencing domestic violence. We also linked with all of the excellent domestic and sexual violence services in Cork city and county and they jumped at the chance to collaborate with us and be part of the video.

The video has been a great success and has even been shared on twitter by national DV agencies such as Women's Aid and Safe Ireland. The CUMH DV Committee hope to continue to develop new and creative ways to reach and support our patients who may be experiencing domestic violence and send them the message that they are not alone and we are still here to help them.

The video is accessible on the Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate YouTube channel [HERE](#)

Bons Secours Hospital Research Collaborations Update

Biomarker Prediction of Response to Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors

This project came out of a cancer research conference organised by Prof Rosin Connolly where Dr Brian Bird met Dr Ken Nally and discovered they shared an interest in circulating immune cells as predictors of response to chemo and immunotherapy. Dr Nally was instrumental in setting up the flow cytometry platform in APC. Aided by a grant from Roche Ireland and in collaboration with Prof Stephen Finn in TCD and many APC laboratories and investigators they hope to identify biomarkers of response and toxicity to immunotherapy in cancer patients. This is a collaborative study involving Dr Dearbhaile Collins in CUH and an example of how patients, clinicians and scientists can work together to expand knowledge and improve cancer care.

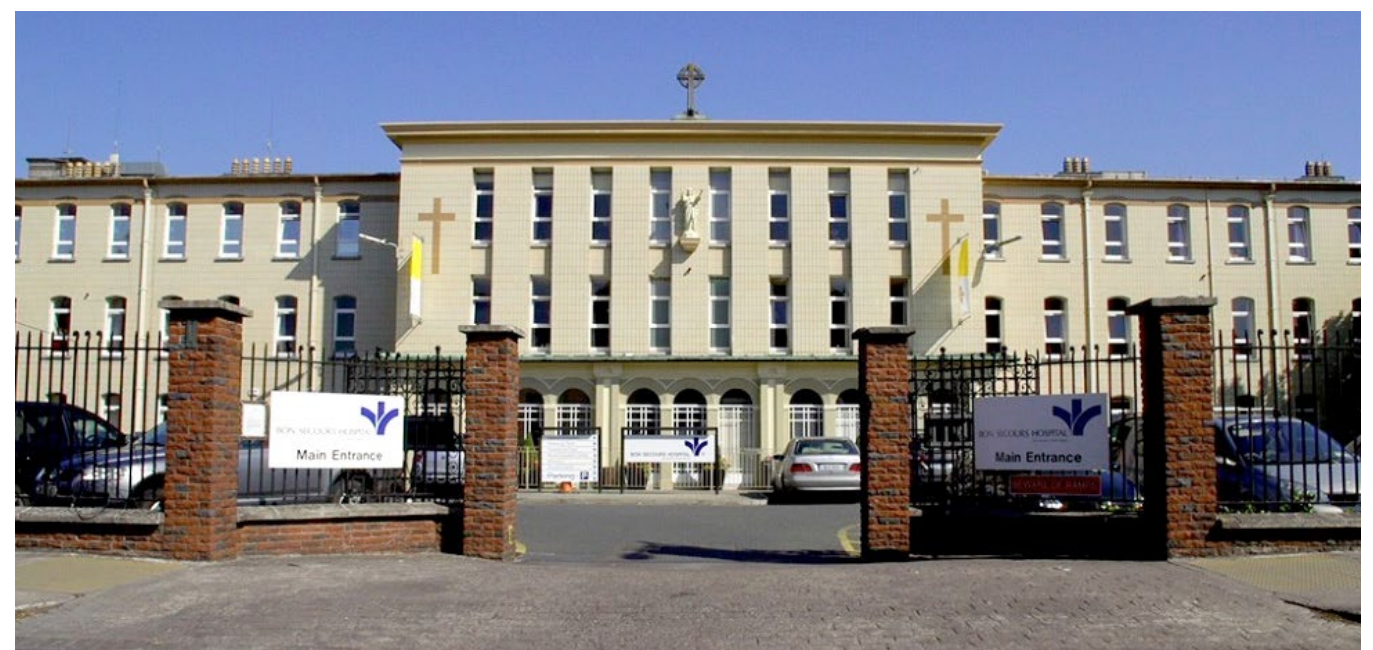
Predicting histological and clinical outcome in coeliac disease by combining host (epi)genetics, transcriptomic and microbiota profiling

In a study funded by APEX MSCA (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action) COFUND programme and Science Foundation Ireland, principal investigator Dr Marcus Claesson and postdoctoral fellow Dr Shriram Patel (APC Microbiome Ireland & School of Microbiology at University College Cork) have teamed up with gastroenterologists Dr Lucina Jackson and Dr William Stack at Bons Secours Hospital, and Dr Elizabeth Kenny at CUH, to predict histological and clinical outcome in coeliac disease by combining host (epi)genetics, transcriptomic and microbiota profiling. The only treatment of this small-bowel immune-mediated disease, for the 1% of the population it affects, is lifelong adherence to a gluten-free diet (GFD). The team will investigate if intestinal bacteria (microbiota), combined with the expressed human genes (transcriptome) and with local modifications of regulatory DNA (epigenome), can determine coeliac symptoms at disease onset and predict how effective GFD will

be. If they can identify and understand what specific combinations of microbiota, transcriptome, epigenome and genotype that drive intestinal imbalance during CD, it might also be possible to design simpler methods to detect these combinations in the clinic.

Colonic microbiota is associated with inflammation and host epigenomic alterations in inflammatory bowel disease

Dr Claesson and Prof Fergus Shanahan have previously worked with gastroenterologists Drs Jackson and Stack also on the microbiome of inflammatory bowel disease. In one of the largest studies of its kind, they collected paired colonic biopsies from 242 patients with IBD and controls, and analysed mucosal microbiota, host epigenome, transcriptome, genotype and diet. In a paper published last year in Nature Communications (DOI: 10.1038/s41467-020-15342-5) they showed important changes in the microbes and human gene regulation, which were directly associated with inflammation in the colon.”



THE BEGINNING OF THE END: COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT IN IRELAND SOUTH

After most of 2020 being marked by the coronavirus pandemic, we are all hoping that 2021 will be the year when COVID-19 vaccines help the world return to some semblance of normality.

The rollout of the vaccine across Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate involved a series of large-scale operations delivered in collaboration with colleagues at each hospital campus.

Sinéad Horgan, Assistant Director of Nursing and Flu Lead, SSWHG commented: *“The beginning of the end. No matter what site you were in across the South/South West Hospital Group, every person queuing for vaccine had the same look of their*

faces – a look of delight, excitement, relief and hope. It was so uplifting to see multidisciplinary staff across the Hospital Group to be so generous with their time and skills, to assist not only in the vaccine rollout in the acute hospitals, but also in the residential care facilities.”

Cork University Maternity Hospital: COVID-19 Vaccinators

The Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate made a decision to assist with the mass vaccination drive in 2020 and provided close to 25 staff to the mass vaccination drive in our sister hospital

Cork University Hospital. The administration of the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines took place from 30 December 2020, with second doses being administered from 20 January 2021.

In total, CUMH peer vaccinators alongside CUH peer vaccinators provided 5,830 of the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to healthcare staff. It was great to see both CUH and CUMH collaborating to ensure Cork front line staff would be protected.

Sinéad Creedon, Infection Prevention and Control Clinical Nurse Specialist in CUMH who co-ordinated the scheduling of peer vaccinators from CUMH commented: *“We were able to quickly mobilise to support the COVID-19 vaccination efforts, as we had 25 staff trained as peer vaccinators since August 2020 for the flu vaccination drive. Peer vaccinators for the COVID-19 vaccine need similar training – Basic Life Support (BLS) training alongside Anaphylaxis training. In addition, they need training on the protocol that is specific to the particular vaccine being administered. This was the only additional training our CUMH vaccinators needed and all were more than willing to support the vaccination drive.”*

Over 13 days in January alone, almost 6000 vaccines were administered at the vaccination clinics in Seahorse Ward in CUH. Midwives and nurses from CUMH presented for duty at 07:30 each day and vaccinated right up to 18:00 each evening. The successful roll out of vaccines to healthcare workers is in no small part to the hard work and dedication of staff at local hospital level.



Pictured left: The peer vaccination team from CUMH: Susan Vaughan, Ann Buckley, Mary Quaid, Mary McSweeney, Catherine O’Sullivan. **Pictured right:** Professor John R. Higgins, Clinical Director Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate receives the COVID-19 vaccine

Peer vaccinators who made themselves available from CUMH included Sinead Creedon from IPC; Sheila Coghlan from ER; Mary Quaid, Kate Lyons and Niamh Spillane from Midwifery Management; Mary McSweeney, Ann Buckley, Catherine O’Sullivan, Mary Cullinane and Susan Vaughan from NNU; Helena Mulcahy, Isobel Scally and Siobhán Hayes from Labour Ward; Orla Attridge from 2 South; Avril Stannard, Cora Murphy and Breda Hayes from Practice Development; Barbara Hall and Adrienne Murphy from Outpatients Department and Karyn Walsh from Early Pregnancy Unit.

University Hospital Kerry: COVID-19 Vaccinators

Having finished the winter flu vaccination drive in UHK in 2020, the maternity services peer vaccination team were called upon again in early 2021 as peer vaccinators. Although administration of Pfizer BioNTech vaccine required additional upskilling and training, it was a challenge that three members of the team in Kerry undertook without hesitation. Here’s what they had to say.

“It has been a pleasure to be involved in the COVID-19 19 vaccinations programme. The atmosphere throughout the campaign was one of excitement, a beginning to the end of this pandemic.”

Joann Malik cAMP Maternity Services

University Hospital Waterford: COVID-19 Vaccinators

A large team of trained and active peer vaccinators are the key to University Hospital Waterford’s (UHW) successful flu vaccine rollout in 2020. The same team upskilled to become COVID-19 peer vaccinators in UHW in January 2021. Among them was UHW maternity services peer vaccinator Janet Murphy, Advanced Midwife Practitioner.

The chapel at University Hospital Waterford (UHW) was used as the vaccination centre for staff- this allowed for social distancing, vaccine stations, recovery area and access and exit planned and contained.



Above: Peer vaccinators at the chapel in University Hospital Waterford. Picture: Patrick Browne

“It was a privilege to both receive the COVID-19 vaccine and to give it to colleagues in UHW in January 2021. A great way to start the new year, offering a sense of relief, gratitude and hope for the future.”

Janet Murphy, Advanced Midwife Practitioner, UHW

South Tipperary General Hospital: COVID-19 Vaccinators

A large multidisciplinary team of peer vaccinators in STGH powered through the vaccination of colleagues with the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. Having achieved vaccination rates of over 70% for the flu vaccine in 2020, they were more than ready for the COVID-19 vaccine. Up to 400 staff were vaccinated in a day, thanks to the efficient scheduling work of clerical staff, alongside the vaccinators themselves.



Above: Joann Malik cAMP Maternity Services seen here giving Sandra O’Connor, DOM UHK her vaccination



Above: Peer vaccinators from STGH.
Pictures: @SineadHorgan1 and @STGHnursing

Funding the COVID-19 Fight: Ireland South mass vaccinator training drive

To help in the fight against COVID-19, Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate is funding the training of hundreds of healthcare personnel in Kerry, Cork, Tipperary and Waterford to arm them with the know-how on administering the Pfizer vaccine safely. Ireland South has already reached the target of 500 trained vaccinators and is continuing with the training drive for as long as there is demand for it.

Professor John R. Higgins, Clinical Director Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate has granted the funding for the initiative; Katie Bourke, Director of Midwifery CUMH is leading the training drive and Steve O'Connor, CUMH Finance Manager is managing and overseeing the operation. Additional trainers were sourced thanks to close collaboration between local hospitals, primary care, UCC, HSE Ambulance and the company, Critical Care Training.

The small army of vaccinators are crucial to the rollout of vaccinations in our community through hubs in the South and South West of Ireland. This rollout is being co-ordinated by Bridie O'Sullivan, Chief Director of Nursing/Midwifery, SSWHG.

Vaccinators, who must be clinical staff such as nursing/midwifery or medics, need to complete a number of training elements. First, they need to complete the initial Basic Life Support (BLS) training online. Then they attend face-to-face vaccinator training at locations such as Brookfield Health Science Complex, University College Cork and hotels in Kerry, Waterford and Tipperary.

These training sessions include a two-hour practical training for BLS as well as 1.5 hours of face-to-face training for anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction). Following this, COVID-19 vaccine specific training (depending on the type of vaccine being administered) can be done on HSE Land, the online training portal providing courses and learning resources for staff in the HSE.

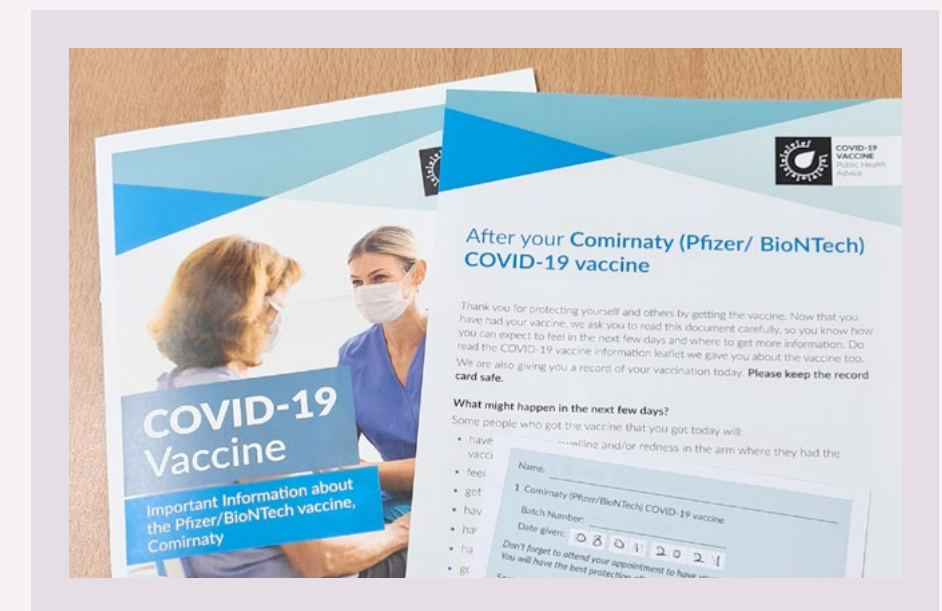
Commenting on the initiative, Professor John R. Higgins, Clinical Director Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate said;

“Everyone needs to look after each other and help out in any way they can. This was one way that we could help and we were delighted to do so. It has been a major logistical exercise but the response from staff has just been incredible.”

If you are a doctor, midwife or nurse and are interested in attending these training sessions, please contact Fiona Barton from Critical Care Training on fiona@criticalcaretraining.ie

Both Siobhán Kavanagh (Midwife) and Mary O'Hanlon (CMM2, Colposcopy) returned from retirement to assist with the peer vaccination drive. STGH are so grateful for their continued service and commitment to helping colleagues and staff.

“Friday 8 January 2021 was a very historical day in STGH Clonmel with the arrival of the PfizerBioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines. It was greeted with huge emotion and applause. The vaccination team feels privileged and proud to help in keeping our colleagues safe and healthy, and to give hope of brighter days ahead and a better 2021. We continue with the vaccination of our colleagues and staff in the wider community. Stay safe everyone and keep up the great work.”
Siobhán Kavanagh, Midwife STGH



HIHI HEALTHCARE INNOVATION DIPLOMA GRADUATES

by Donna Burtchaell, Communications Project Manager, UCC Academy



**Kannan Natchimuthu,
Senior Neonatal/Paediatric
Occupational Therapist, CUMH**

Kannan Natchimuthu is the first and only Occupational Therapist (OT) working fulltime in a Neonatal Unit (NNU) in Ireland and we're lucky to have him working in the NNU in Cork University Maternity Hospital.

Kannan is also the first member of staff in Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate to complete the HIHI Healthcare Innovation Diploma. He completed his diploma in September 2020, officially graduating in January 2021 to join a growing network of HIHI Healthcare Innovation Champions, qualified to lead and shape the direction of Irish healthcare innovation.

Kannan found the diploma fascinating and of huge benefit. *"It's really inspiring and practical, you get to meet a lot of high profile entrepreneurs - we even had a lecture from the Minister of Health, Stephen Donnelly who was happy to share his experience and ideas."*

The HIHI Healthcare Innovation Diploma is a unique Level 9 NFQ HIHI/TCD Postgraduate Diploma that lasts one year with courses on a Friday and Saturday every 6 weeks. Kannan was hugely grateful to Ireland South as they funded the cost of the diploma, with students covering accommodation and travel to Trinity College Dublin themselves.

"The diploma highlights the importance of taking a multidisciplinary approach, and knowing the right people to talk to, to make an idea become a reality."

"It helps you to see things differently and to consider the business point of view. I found the Health Economics module a real eye-opener as it helps you assess the long term beneficial impact of an innovation in terms of quality of life years. Spending money on something that benefits a children's service for example, will impact more people for longer. Ideas that focus on prevention and health promotion are of particular value as they will save money in the long run."

Kannan is currently putting his training to good use and is collaborating with a colleague in Cork University Hospital on a waiting room app for patients. This real-time app will show patients in hospital waiting rooms how long they need to wait until their next appointment. He also has a couple of other ideas up his sleeve, but that's another story ...



**Caitriona Heffernan,
Senior Speech and Language
Therapist, CUH**

Caitriona Heffernan is another recent graduate of the HIHI Healthcare Innovation Diploma and another high potential change maker in Irish health. She was named one of the top 100 Professionals in Healthcare last year by Hospital Professional News due to her passion for improvement and innovation. Caitriona is also a key member of the 'CUH Improvers' group to promote, support and celebrate quality improvement in the hospital.

"Throughout my career I have always been drawn to problem solving and finding creative ways in which to improve patient experiences and patient outcomes. Despite this internal drive, I found myself lacking in confidence around testing the viability of my ideas and structuring proposals to secure 'buy in' from essential stakeholders."

"The Postgraduate Diploma in Healthcare Innovation has taught me how to objectively analyse the potential of an idea using structured frameworks, how to accurately define the problem to be solved and the importance of end user involvement. It has given me the opportunity to develop and practice my skills in pitching an idea persuasively and professionally to key decision makers. I feel that my skillset for innovation has expanded considerably through completing this course and I feel ready to apply my learning to the next innovation project."

Caitriona would highly recommend the course to anyone who wants to be an agent of change within healthcare. *"The internal network of healthcare innovators in Ireland is rapidly growing and this is such an exciting time to get involved."*

Caitriona will be embracing innovation fulltime in Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate in the near future via a one year secondment as Innovation Programme Lead for CUMH. Her focus on innovation will also include involvement in external programmes as she will be on the HIHI Mentor Panel for the Spark Ignite Programme and will also be a judge in the HIHI Design on the Frontline competition.

MUH virtual clinical library of surgical symptoms and signs

It seems impossible to ensure that all students gain exposure to good bedside teaching in all core areas of the undergraduate surgical curriculum. Patient mix and bedside learning opportunities vary across clinical placements.

Establishment of day of surgery admission, increasing day-case operations, and increased student numbers have diluted the opportunities for clinical interaction with “real” patients. Multiple competing curricular demands limit the time for individual clinical attachments, so that students might not see and examine patients with important common surgical conditions, despite satisfactory attendance.

Following some concern that physical examination skills relevant to surgical patients were slipping amongst final year medical students, a project was initiated in May 2019.

Significant effort is invested to recruit willing patients with good clinical signs, so as to enable the administration of high stakes clinical exams in a fair manner. Such patients were the ideal starting point for this initiative.

Patients who were recruited for the Final Surgical Clinical Examinations

in MUH gave consent to have the relevant physical examination recorded for subsequent study on-line by UCC Medical Students. The clinical teaching/examination was performed by Mr Gerald McGreal, just after the surgical exams finished, in May 2019.

With the help of the Audio-visual department in UCC, the video recordings were edited, text was added to highlight important points and the resources were made available on the UCC learning platform - Canvas - in the first term of 2019/2020.

From there, the project grew, to include recordings of interesting patients who were admitted during the following months for surgical care in MUH. These subsequent recordings were made with a mobile phone and loaded directly via Panopto onto Canvas. Supportive tutorials to complement the patient videos were also recorded using Panopto. Related case-illustrations (Word documents) were created, to mimic clinical exam and written exam questions, assisting students to understand how tutorial/video material might be applied in an exam setting.

Currently we have 37 patient recordings (varying from 2 mins to 19 mins in duration), 23 tutorials (average 12 mins duration) and 16 case illustrations.

In March 2020, when students were unable to finish their hospital placements due to COVID, this significant body of recorded material was available for students to continue their learning from home. What was initially intended as a supplement to clinical learning became the main “clinical” learning for many students.

In Sept- Dec 2020 students intermittently availed of these resources if they were self-isolating or wished to supplement their clinical exposure.

In Jan/Feb 2021, with students once again excluded from hospital placements, the resources became an essential component of on-line learning, supported with MS Teams tutorials.

Tutorials and patient videos illustrating basic topics (e.g. abdominal pain, intermittent claudication) are now part of the 3rd Med programme. An expanded version of these topics is available to 4th meds while the whole package, including some more complex topics, are available to final meds.

We are unaware of a comparable resource of clinical histories and focussed clinical examinations, which patients at MUH enabled willingly, and we are glad that the initiative from MUH

is available to all medical students at UCC. We hope that the legacy of this “clinical library” produced in MUH will be beneficial for clinical education indefinitely.

Michelle Reardon,
Lecturer in Surgery MUH
Gerald McGreal,
Consultant Vascular Surgeon MUH

INDEX OF CANVAS RESOURCES



REFLECTING ON A COVID YEAR AT CUMH: The impact on personal and professional lives

Adapted from an article in the **Echo 23 Dec** by Emma Connolly



Those moments when a woman and her new baby are reunited with her partner on leaving CUMH are really special, and something you can't help but stop and observe, says Clinical Midwifery Manager Niamh Spillane. It's a lovely moment that will stay with her.

Restrictions in Cork University Maternity Hospital during Covid means partners are only allowed to be present during labour and delivery, and for a short time afterwards.

Niamh has worked in CUMH for the past 12 years, and took on a new role, clinical Midwife Manager 3 for Gynae Services and Pregnancy Loss, just as the global pandemic hit. This role saw her as line manager for a complex ward that deals with general gynaecological services, gynaecological cancers and also pregnancy loss.

Some weeks were busier than others, but fortunately, she said pregnant women took very good care of themselves from the outset of the pandemic. Nonetheless, the first few months were very challenging as everyone — patients

and staff, both personally and professionally, adapted to how they lived and worked.

“We all had to do things differently. Our Clinical Director described it as a ‘marathon’ and said it would be long and hard, but our priority was to keep our staff and patients safe and that's what we did. It was quite stressful, there was a huge amount of training involved but we adapted over the months.

“When it comes to pregnancy losses, the care is centered around tenderness and compassion. We worked on a case by case basis as you only get one chance to get it right.

“It is the same principal for oncology and end of life cases. Clarity around communication was important, having a clear plan in place for staff, the patient and their family, and then making that happen,” said Niamh.

She often encounters mums-to-be arriving at the hospital's screening tent on admission. “Wearing masks can make it more difficult

to reassure them, and of course we can't put an arm around them or a hand on their arm. So it's all about the eye contact and having a conversation, just a little word, to help them get to the next stage. Everyone's coping skills are different, but they're so grateful for that.”

Niamh is originally from Carrigtwohill and lives in the city. She has five grown up children in ages ranging from 34 to 23. Her family, and her wonderful colleagues, she said, got her through the past few months.

The intense nature of her work saw her return to running after a 10-year gap. “It was really good for the head space — you could sort the whole world out on a run!”

Elective surgery has resumed on the ward since July, and Niamh says they've done tremendous work in reducing waiting lists. “We had the longest waiting lists in the country back in 2017 — 4,700 people waiting for an appointment. Through a range of initiatives we got that down to just over 1,000 before Covid hit, which we were very proud of.

“Covid set us back but we’ve got it back to that figure again. We’re all working differently but staff are so relieved to be back to some sort of normality.”

This year’s CUMH annual service of remembrance, which provides comfort to so many, could not take place as usual, but was held virtually. See the beautiful ceremony at <https://cumhremembers.ie/>

DRAWING ON INNER STRENGTH

Having new mums asking if their baby’s grandparents can hold them when they get home was just so sad. That’s a memory of the past few months that will stay with Alex Campbell, Candidate Advanced Midwife Practitioner, at CUMH.

But so too will the many strong connections she had with women before and after they gave birth, when necessary Covid restrictions meant their partners could not be with them.

“Midwives are all about supporting women anyway during what is a massive event for them. But I feel like I had some particularly touching moments this year with women. It’s normal to be nervous when having a baby, it’s a very emotional and powerful time regardless of Covid, and of course nobody wanted to come in the hospital alone. It was sad to see women wave goodbye to their families but everyone understood this was the safest thing

for everyone. It was our job to instil confidence in them, and what will also stay with me is their inner strength.”

“What I have noticed though is that in some cases this has resulted in partners being more present. They know they can make the phone calls to people afterwards so they’re more focused on what’s happening in the moment.

“We’re also seeing more partners having skin-to-skin contact with the baby straight away because they know they have limited time and that this is so beneficial.”

Personally, Alex, originally from Kerry, had concerns for her own parents over the past few months: “I haven’t been home since February and I have found that quite tough. I felt I

couldn’t justify the journey. They did come up during the summer, and I hope to get home over Christmas again.”

Getting the keys to her first house over lockdown was something more positive and helped keep her busy outside of work: “An old friend of mine who had been living in Dublin has moved to Cork since Covid and is renting a room from me, so that’s another good thing to come out of the past few months.”

She’s feeling hopeful for 2021: “The vaccine is a very promising development, even though we have a long way to go. Hopefully, that will mean things will be gentler on people and we can bring back some normality. As humans, we all love connection and we miss that, so hopefully there’ll be more of that next year.”



Left: Niamh Spillane, Clinical Midwife Manager 3 - Gynae Services, CUMH and Alex Campbell, Candidate Advanced Midwife Practitioner, CUMH

The balancing act that is home-schooling while also coming to work



It has been incredibly difficult for many healthcare workers with children when schools closed again at the start of 2021 due to Level 5 restrictions. Babies are still being born in a pandemic, and some maternity units are particularly busy this year. As a result, many must balance the need to come to work, while also still needing to provide childcare at home as well covering home-schooling. Not surprising, this can prove to be a mammoth and overwhelming task.

We spoke to a selection of staff in our maternity units in Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate to get an idea of how they are coping.

Mairead O’Sullivan, Lactation Consultant, University Hospital Kerry

Mairead has four children, ranging in ages from 8 to 13 with three in primary and the eldest in secondary. Mairead works 32 hours a week, taking 7 hours a week as parental leave.

“It’s been quite overwhelming and a headache to be honest,” she says. “While my husband, who works in construction could be at home with the children during the first lockdown, he’s been working this year and so it’s been particularly tough. We’ve been able to create a bubble with my parents and we have a first cousin who is currently out of work due to the closure of the hotel industry, so we’ve shared the childcare between us.”

Mairead mostly manages the home-schooling herself for the children in primary. “It’s quite a balancing act. They all have Zoom calls at different times of the day so I often need to be there and so need to work around those. Home schooling is usually left to the evening time when I get return, which can take a couple of hours after I get home at 6-8pm. While they go to the same school, they all use different software from Aladdin to See Saw to Gmail to Hotmail and so, it’s too much for my parents. We have two laptops but I had to purchase two iPads at the start of the year which was expensive. I also need to leave the teenager to his own devices online, which is not ideal but unavoidable.”

The re-opening of primary schools in March isn’t providing relief at the moment. “My youngest

went back this week, but as he’s in his communion year, he’s getting 1.5 hours homework including religious preparation as they need to catch up. So he must work in the afternoons while the others are finished, which is creating agro at home for the next couple of weeks.”

The glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel will come in mid April when her eldest returns to secondary. But for 5 weeks he’ll have to stay at home while the others are in school.

“At 13, he’s too old to have my parents babysit him all day, so I’m not sure what to do with him yet, it’s a little stressful thinking about it.”

Mairead is very grateful for the flexibility that UHK maternity services have offered. “I do my half day of admin work at home on Tuesdays, and while it may take a full day to actually get it done with the kids around, it still makes things more manageable.”

Maghela Coen, Midwife, South Tipperary General Hospital

Maghela has five children, three are in university in the UK and two are at home, including a 13 year-old in first year and an almost 8 year old in 2nd class. Maghela works 30 hours a week with a night shift every five weeks.

“I found this lockdown with home-schooling easier than the first, when the children found it difficult to get into the mindset of actually learning at home. We now have established a good routine during the week. The 13 year-old

is more self directed and has more Zoom calls and online classes so mainly needs help with her work after those.”

Maghela is lucky as her husband, who also works shifts, is usually able to work opposite shifts to her so can help with the home-schooling too.

“Between us we can cover most of the childcare and home-schooling. We’re in a bubble with my brother and sister-in-law so if we’re both working night shifts, one can stay over to mind the children.”

“As I can share the load with my husband, I’ve actually enjoyed the time I’ve spent with the children. I’ve got to know their abilities and strengths more and have an understanding principal who has reassured us that school work does not have to be done every day. That lightens the load too.”

Cathy Cronin, Midwife Labour Ward, Cork University Maternity Hospital

“It’s probably been the most stressful and toughest couple of months I can remember to date.” answers Cathy Cronin to the question, how have you found the start of the year, both home-schooling and working.

Cathy has been a midwife for over 15 years and has five children from the ages of 2 to 8, with one in preschool and three in primary. She works 19.5 hours a week doing the night shift. Cathy has struggled a lot as both her own mother and her mother-in-law are high risk and so can’t help at home. To make things even more challenging, her husband is a farmer and this time of the year is when he’s most busy.

“We do have a young woman in our bubble who minds the children when I return from the night shift and need to sleep from 6.30am until 1pm. Once I get up, I do the home-schooling. As they’re very young and two are learning to read, they need one-to-one support so it can take at least four hours to get through it all.”

Like many who do not specialise in education, Cathy feels she wasn’t built for home-schooling and so the reopening of primary schools in March has been a huge relief.

“Since the schools opened, it’s been like a big weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I no longer dread the week ahead on a Sunday once the ping of email signals the return to the home-schooling week ahead. Things are going to get a bit easier.”

Maeve Murphy, Gynaecology Nurse, University Hospital Waterford

“I can’t wait for the schools to open,” says Maeve Murphy, a Gynaecology Nurse from UHW. Maeve has two children, a son aged 11 and a daughter, 13.

“I’m excited for them to get back to school and see their friends and get back to their norm.”

“It’s been very hard on them being stuck indoors with the bad weather, and no outlet to play sport with their friends or anything. It’s been quite intense at home as a result, as they only get to see us, their parents.”

Maeve works 27 hours a week and her husband works on the frontline too as a detective. As they’re from Wexford, there isn’t the option of family close-by to help with the children. Luckily

they’ve been able to work opposite shifts to ensure one of them can oversee the children.

“We’re lucky that our work has been flexible to allow us to change our days and times to ensure we have cover at home.”

“As they’re that little bit older, they don’t need too much handholding with the home-schooling. Getting them up and ensuring they are doing their work in the main focus. The monotony of it all is getting to them now and they really miss their friends. I have to be a lot more lenient with my son and allow him on the Playstation mid-week which would never happen during school term.”

The increase in gaming is a common feature in homes of parents with children of similar ages. With the structure gone, and the days long and the weather poor, it’s one of the few ways children can have fun and communicate with their friends. How easy it will be to reverse the trend once school starts remains to be seen.



UPDATE FROM UCC PHARMACY SOCIETY

1. British National Formulary Drive:

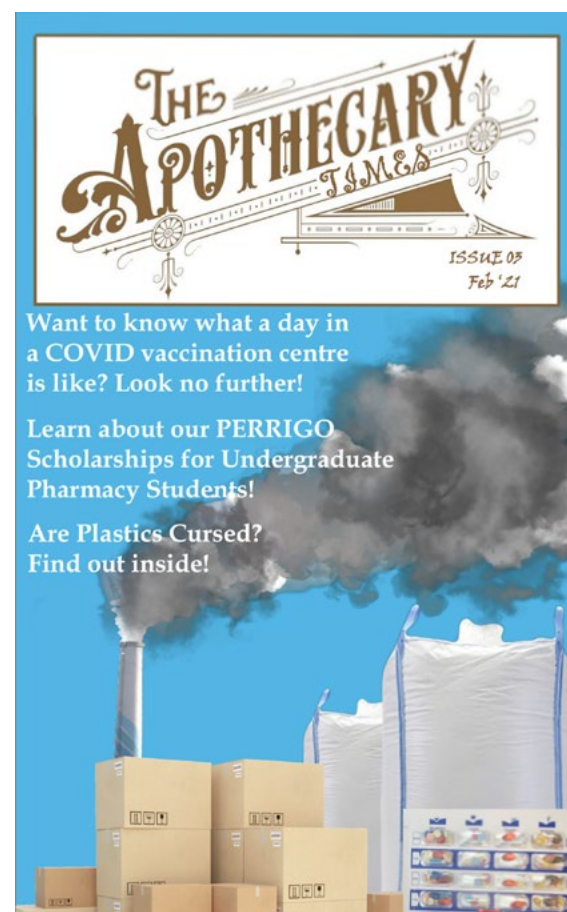
The British National Formulary (BNF) is an important reference source used by all Pharmacy students in UCC. It provides important information regarding the safe and rational use of all medicines. The BNF is updated every six months, and because healthcare professionals require the most up to date version, there are many slightly outdated copies no longer in use. Since the end of the summer, UCC Pharmacy Society has been contacting hospitals, pharmacies, GP surgeries, UCC alumni, lecturers, and more with the aim of sourcing a recent copy of the BNF for every first-year Pharmacy student.

Through generous donations, we have already secured 60 BNFs, but more are required before we reach our goal. If you have a copy of the BNF from the last five years which you are in a position to donate, please contact the Pharmacy Society at pharmacy@uccsocieties.ie. All people who donate are entered in a draw to win a €100 One-For-All Voucher.

2. Apothecary Times:

This year we launched our new magazine, 'The Apothecary Times'. There are articles in each edition which would be of interest to all healthcare professionals, regardless of discipline, and a huge amount of work goes into writing and editing each issue.

All editions of the magazine can be found [HERE](#)



Want to know what a day in a COVID vaccination centre is like? Look no further!

Learn about our PERRIGO Scholarships for Undergraduate Pharmacy Students!

Are Plastics Cursed? Find out inside!



Update from UCC Medicine Society

Buddy Night - This event was MedSoc's very own matchmaking service for DEM1 and DEM2 students. We asked both years to fill out a survey with their hobbies and interests and paired them together in groups of 4/5. This continued the 'buddy' tradition where each DEM1 has a DEM2 to contact for any help, a DEM2 has a DEM3, and so on! This event helps to build bridges between years and make all students familiar with each other.

'What I Wish My Doctor Knew' - This event was a collaboration with several UCC societies. It was started last year as a way for under-represented groups in society to talk about their experiences in healthcare settings. It's a highly thought-provoking and informative event, giving us medical students a lot to think about in terms of our patient interactions. This year's speakers included a gentleman living with dementia, an intersex advocate, a breast cancer survivor, and more.

HPAT Talk - This talk aimed to give current 6th year students a taste of what it's like to sit the HPAT. We had high scoring HPAT students talk about their

experience sitting the exam, as well as talking through the various sections and giving their own advice.

Specialty Talks - We participated in two specialty talks over the semester. One was in collaboration with the Biomedical Society, named the 'COVID Conference'. We had Professor Colin Bradley speaking about how the current pandemic has affected GP services in Ireland. We also held our own talk with Dr Maeve Durkan - a consultant endocrinologist working in the Bons Secours Hospital, Cork. She spoke about her life and the journey she took to reach her current position!

Online Quizzes - We held several quizzes during the semester, for DEM1 and DEM2 students. These were organised to help them navigate their first CA exams of the year, FM1010 and FM2101 respectively, using our own sample questions to get them ready for the real tests!

November - MedSoc participated in November this year, with help from other UCC medical societies. After growing out our furry faces, we raised almost €2,500 euro for men's health!



UCC General Practice Society



gp@uccsocieties.ie

UPDATE FROM UCC GP SOCIETY

Last semester the GP Society had three main events.

1. We collaborated with the LGBTQ society on the transgender healthcare conference by organizing a guest speaker, Dr Sarah Hough who has experience working with transgender patients and assisting them with their transition. She spoke on how GPs can better help their patients through this process and on how access to transgender-aware GPs and GP education on transgender issues should be improved in the future.
2. We also hosted an online Journal Club that was very well attended. The topic was vaccine hesitancy and the discussion surrounded the pervasiveness of this issue and how it can be overcome. Especially, what GPs can do to help overcome vaccine hesitancy with their patients.
3. Another event of ours was our Virtual Mock OSCE. Upper year medical students volunteered their time to help run virtual history taking and examination stations with students preparing for their first OSCE at the end of December. This event was a success and was greatly appreciated by the students! We will hold another Mock OSCE later this semester.

Earlier this semester, we partnered with your society, Paeds soc and Emerg soc to climb the tallest mountain in cork in support of Barretstown Camp.

Update from Association of Medical Students Ireland (AMSI) UCC



Our Med Minds - Care Package Delivery Service

Our Med Minds is an annual event organised by AMSI in anticipation of Mental Health Awareness Week to raise awareness and promote mindfulness of student mental health. This year, AMSI collaborated with UCC SÁMH (Suicide Awareness & Mental Health) Society to set up a fundraiser delivery service where people could send care packages to their friends and loved ones while Ireland was in its second lockdown. Not only did some lucky individuals receive a little boost to their welfare, we also managed to raise a total of €171 for Jigsaw!

Men's Day talk

As part of International Men's Day on November 19th, AMSI UCC held an informative talk with guest speaker Finian Murray, Men's Health Development Officer (HSE). The talk, specifically focused on Young Men's Health, gave a great insight into the changing world of men's health, ranging from physical fitness to mental health and masculinity.

Finian's presentation also highlighted a number of landmarks in the development of a National Men's Health Policy that aims to improve engagement of men with health programmes and create greater awareness for the problems faced by men that were and still are overlooked. Although the presentation displayed some upsetting recent statistics, the overarching theme of the evening was of hope for the future of men's health, with improvements being made all the time. Some of his work and more resources can be found at www.malehealth.ie

Homework club

In collaboration with BRIJ CORK, AMSI set up a homework club with children living in the Ashbourne House Direct Provision Centre. There are 5 first year secondary school students and 5 UCC students involved. They meet virtually every week in one-on-one sessions. The homework club has been a huge success so far and we hope to continue and expand in the future!