

# Top EU honour for UCC project

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Just four observations is all it can take to predict who will end up in hospital, a nursing home, or dead within the next six months if they do not receive the care needed.

The simple procedure, developed by a team in University College Cork, has won recognition from the EU and is being snapped up by other countries.

They screened 800 people last March, rating their mental, physical and other aspects of their health and wellbeing, and assigning them a risk factor from a low of one to a high of five.

When they checked them again six months later, they found those in the higher risk group to be 33 times more likely to go into a nursing home, three times more likely to be hospitalised, or 15 times more likely to be dead within six months than the low-risk group.

Developed by William Molloy of UCC, with research carried out by Ronáin Ó Caoimh, it was funded by the HSE after Gabrielle O'Keeffe of the Health and Community service office in Cork approached them with the request to devise a system.

Prof Molloy explained that community nurses often have an intuitive knowledge about the state of their elderly patients, but needed an objective way to get this across to the other medical professionals they deal with.

Working with Dr Ó Caoimh and Liz O'Connell, director of public health nursing in Ballincollig and Mahon, over the past two years, they devised a chart that could be filled out within minutes that gives an accurate assessment of just how frail a person is.

Thanks to their involvement in the EU's innovation partnership on active and healthy ageing, word has spread and a group in Portugal is adopting it while there is also interest from Perth in Australia.

This and two other projects under the name Collage won the highest rating of three stars from the EU at a special ceremony to become a reference site for others to copy. Commission vice-president Neelie Kroes described the awards as the "oscar of innovation for ageing", and stressed that Collage and the other recipient projects were paving the way for a healthier and age-friendly society.

The emphasis was on scaling up the projects and applying them throughout Europe.