



Issue 41 | December 2021

# CoMH eNEWS

College of Medicine and Health, UCC



# UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

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CoMH eNews is intended for circulation among staff and students of the College of Medicine and Health, UCC. Extracts from CoMH eNews should not be published without the permission of the editor.



WISHING EVERYONE A VERY HAPPY AND SAFE CHRISTMAS



Celebration Event



Paralympics



Research



Honorary Degree



Tribute





Dear Colleagues,

We had great excitement on campus over the last couple of weeks. First with our Celebration Event for those who graduated on line over the last couple of years, then with our in person conferring ceremony. I think us staff were as excited about the event as the students. It was a truly heart warming experience, words can't describe how heartening it is to celebrate our students' achievements in person once more. While our university has done an excellent job of adapting to virtual ceremonies, to be there in person and see the smiles on the faces of our students and their families as they received the parchments they worked so hard for is an experience that I really treasure. The buzz of being together once

more was palpable as many a photoshoot was had against the backdrop of our beautiful campus. As a College and a health care system we can be deservedly proud of our graduates and the range of degrees conferred.

Our College has seen significant growth in the number of students and the range of courses offered in recent years, the numbers indicate the outstanding dedication and commitment of our staff and of our colleagues in the health service. We had 25 students awarded their doctoral degrees at this ceremony, an outstanding achievement for all concerned. At this ceremony, we took the opportunity to award an Honorary Doctorate of Medicine to Dr Margaret Murphy for her absolutely tireless work and achievements as a patient advocate. We plan to have Dr Murphy deliver a talk at one of our future town halls so that you can hear her story for yourselves, she is a truly incredible person.

I also attended the ceremony for the raising of the MTU flag last week, we enjoy strong collaboration with MTU and I was delighted to see the creation of MTU celebrated so well and in person by so many leaders and politicians. Congratulations to MTU President Maggie Cusack and her team.

Congratulations also to Professor John Higgins on the launch of CUMH Ambulatory Suite, Gynaecology Day Ward and Induction Room Delivery Suite, CUMH goes from strength to strength.

While coming together is a joyous experience, we are not yet out of the woods and we must continue to stay the course as we navigate this pandemic. With case numbers rising in recent

weeks it is important that we all continue to follow public health advice by observing physical distancing, wearing masks, and getting tested if you display any symptoms of COVID-19.

In better news, I am delighted to see that our thriving research culture is well-represented in this newsletter. From Dr Olivia O'Leary's work on the maternal microbiome to Dr Patrick Harrison's cutting edge research on cystic fibrosis to Professor Roisin Connolly's findings on inhibitor drugs which help prime patients for anti-cancer treatment, there are plenty of exciting developments on the research front. Speaking of Professor Connolly, we recently celebrated her joining the university with an inaugural lecture event at which she delivered a fascinating lecture about translational cancer research. It was my pleasure to introduce Roisin and help celebrate her career so far.

Our most recent entry in the 2021/22 Inaugural Lecture Series took place on the 24th of November, when Horgan Chair in Neonatology Professor Eugene Dempsey gave a lecture on preventing preterm brain injury – I'd advise any who missed it to catch the replay on our [YouTube channel](#). More information on the series is available [on our site](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Whelton".

**Professor Helen Whelton**

Head of College of Medicine and Health  
University College Cork

# INCLUSION HEALTH RESEARCH GROUP



A new research group has been established in the College of Medicine and Health. A genuinely interdisciplinary group, the aim of the Inclusion Health Research Group (IHRG) is to further the objective of more equitable and inclusive population health by working collaboratively across all the Schools in the College of Medicine and Health, and the wider community.

The group was established by Dr Angela Flynn in the School of Nursing and Midwifery when she put out a call for expressions of interest in December 2020. By January more than 25 colleagues had responded expressing

an interest. The group now has over 35 members who want to 1) undertake research that addresses issues of inclusion health and health inequity, and 2) integrate inclusion health concerns into the undergraduate curricula across the College of Medicine and Health. The IHRG aim to locate their work within the frameworks of human rights instruments, the Social Determinants of Health (WHO CSDH), the Sustainable Development Goals, and UCC's Connected Curriculum.

The group meets online on the first Friday each month and wants to explore ways

to reduce health inequities across the population, by enabling vulnerable and marginalised groups to access healthcare and improve their health. They aim to achieve this by involving patients, members of the public, community and civic groups in the design, planning, implementation, and review of research and curricular development.

A key objective is to develop the curricula across our health professions programmes for explicit integration of core principles of equity, social justice and consideration of the social determinants of health (SDH) in the educational preparation of health professionals. The IHRG have already collaborated in an application to the IRC's New Foundations research grants call. In collaboration with the Good Shepherd Services Cork, the proposed project aims to examine access to a wide range of health services for families experiencing homelessness.

Anyone with an interest in this area is very welcome to join us. We particularly welcome colleagues from minority groups whom we acknowledge are underrepresented in our research group.

Please contact [angela.flynn@ucc.ie](mailto:angela.flynn@ucc.ie) if you would like to join or learn more.

## Patient advocate awarded Honorary Degree at UCC



A tireless patient advocate was recently awarded an honorary doctorate at UCC.

Dr Margaret Murphy's 21-year-old son Kevin, died in 1999, suffering from hypercalcemia (too much calcium in the blood), a condition that is treatable in the early stages. When compiling the file in the hospital, a Post-It note containing vital calcium results was stuck to the back of a letter and was not seen until six weeks after Kevin's death.

Since that time Margaret has devoted her energies to tirelessly working with healthcare professionals on disclosure and the creation of a no-blame culture in the medical fields. She has gone onto represent Ireland at Patients for Patients Safety Ireland (WHO) and has made an extraordinary contribution to the field of Patient Safety and Healthcare quality improvement.

Margaret was awarded an honorary doctorate in Medicine at a ceremony in UCC. In thanking the NUI and UCC, Dr Murphy said that receiving this award from her hometown university has special

meaning for her as a validation of the global advocacy role which is spearheaded by the WHO Patients for Patient Safety Programme.

"This outreach to me as an individual, also honours our loved ones who have been harmed by healthcare, albeit unintentionally and whose patient journeys have informed the work we do as we strive for excellence so that all people receiving care will be as safe as possible, as soon as possible," she said.

Commenting, Professor John O'Halloran, President of UCC stated; "Margaret has been an incredibly positive force for change, all the while being understanding of the real challenges clinicians face in a changing world. Her powerful personal testimony as to the series of events that led up to and followed on after Kevin's tragic death, has had direct personal impact on many healthcare students and professionals worldwide."

Dr Michael Byrne, Head of Student Health, UCC who delivered the encomium for Dr Murphy said: "Margaret has had an extraordinary impact in the field of patient safety not only in Ireland but in the UK Europe and beyond, her contributions have been outstanding, and she has made healthcare a safer place for us all - patient and clinician."

Speaking after the ceremony Professor Helen Whelton, Head of the College of Medicine and Health said: "To lose a child is any parent's nightmare. Margaret is a truly extraordinary person in the way she has applied the nightmare of the loss of her lovely son Kevin to transforming the culture in our health care settings. She has tirelessly and effectively promoted open disclosure and learning from our mistakes. I am delighted to see her honoured for her contribution to the quality culture in our health services."

Almost 4,700 students were conferred at UCC during the month of November.

# Smiles all around as graduates of virtual ceremonies in 2020 & 2021 attend celebration event on campus

In the last weekend of October the university held a celebration event on campus to mark the graduations of all students who were conferred virtually since the beginning of the pandemic. Over 2500 graduates attended over the weekend to celebrate their achievements with family and friends.

Congratulations to all the graduates of 2020 and 2021!



**Pictured above:** President John O'Halloran shares his umbrella with Professor Helen Whelton and Professor Josephine Hegarty, as academic colleagues smile in the rain for our in-person conferring.



## College of Medicine and Health launches new LinkedIn page

The College of Medicine and health recently launched its LinkedIn page. We hope to use this platform to keep you up to date with developments from across the College as they happen and connect with all our staff and students past, present, and future. You can find us [HERE](#)



# Dr Olivia O’Leary awarded funding to research the role of the maternal microbiome in shaping increased susceptibility of females to stress-related psychiatric disorders



**Above:** Dr Olivia O’Leary. Photograph: B. Riedewald.

**Dr Olivia O’Leary**, Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience and APC Microbiome Ireland Research Institute, has been awarded research funding from the Geneva-based **BIOSTIME Institute Nutrition & Care (BINC) Foundation** to explore the role of the maternal gut microbiome in increasing susceptibility of females to stress-related psychiatric disorders and associated brain changes. The project will be conducted with collaborator, **Professor John F. Cryan**, also of the Department of Anatomy & Neuroscience and APC Microbiome Ireland.

Stressors during childhood increase risk to develop depression and anxiety, and stress has been shown to reduce adult hippocampal neurogenesis (production of new neurons in the hippocampus area of the adult brain), an important stress-sensitive brain process that is required for antidepressant action. Intriguingly, depression is >two times more prevalent in females than males. Women are also uniquely vulnerable to postpartum depression. Despite this sex difference in vulnerability, few studies have investigated its underlying mechanisms including the contribution of the maternal gut microbiome.

This project will determine whether manipulation of the maternal microbiome can prevent the negative effects of postpartum stress on hippocampal neurogenesis, and depression and anxiety-like behaviours in mothers, and increase stress resilience in their offspring in a sex-dependent or sex-independent manner. The project also aims to identify the maternal gut bacteria associated sex-specific outcomes in stress susceptibility and resilience. The results of this project will inform the development of antenatal microbiota-based dietary supplements to counteract the negative effects of stress on maternal brain health and to promote stress resilience in their offspring.

# Cystic Fibrosis – New Funding on the Path to a Cure



October 2019 saw the FDA approve a new triple combination therapy which means ~90% of people with cystic fibrosis across the world have a brighter future; but it's not a cure for this deadly disease. So to address this, the CF Foundation (USA) launched

a \$500 million strategy the same month: Path to a Cure (PTAC).<sup>(1)</sup> One of the key pillars of the PTAC initiative is the development of gene editing, the precise and permanent correction of CF mutations, for everyone with CF.

For the last decade, the CF gene editing group led by Dr Patrick Harrison in the Department of Physiology have made a number of key breakthroughs that have underpinned the PTAC initiative, starting in 2012 when the group published the world's first paper<sup>(2)</sup> showing that CF mutations could be corrected by gene editing. Over the next five years, Dr Harrison helped secure six grants totalling more than €1.3 million from the CF Trust (UK) and CF Foundation for both individual and collaborative

projects, culminating in two new CRISPR-based editing strategies for CF,<sup>(3,4)</sup> and an invitation to deliver a keynote talk on gene editing at the 2017 European CF Society conference in Seville.

In the last 18 months, Patrick has secured three new grants to expand the group and strengthen international collaborations, including CF Foundation funding to develop PRIME editing<sup>(5)</sup> for CF (\$250K), a renewal of the CF Trust's Gene Editing Strategic Research Centre in collaboration with scientific and clinical CF experts in UCL and the Crick Institute, and St. George's and Necker Hospitals (£750K), and a CF Foundation PTAC grant to identify the target cell types for gene editing in collaboration with the University of Lisbon (\$280K).

In parallel to his research activities, Patrick co-organised a virtual gene editing workshop as part of the PTAC initiative this Spring, and is on the organising committee for an in-person PTAC research conference in Miami next year. This Summer he was appointed Chair of the CF Trust's Research Grants Review Committee, and renewed his role as the European Editor of the journal Gene Therapy for a further three years.

Closer to home, Patrick was on the organising committee of Cystinosis Ireland's 7th Annual Workshop, set up originally from a HRB KEDS grant in 2014, and was appointed to the Board of IPPOSI, the Patient Organisations, Science & Industry this Autumn.

1) [www.cff.org/About-Us/Media-Center/Press-Releases/Cystic-Fibrosis-Foundation-Launches-\\$500-Million-Path-to-a-Cure/](http://www.cff.org/About-Us/Media-Center/Press-Releases/Cystic-Fibrosis-Foundation-Launches-$500-Million-Path-to-a-Cure/)

2) Lee CM, Flynn, R Hollywood JA, Scallan MF and Harrison PT (2012) Correction of the F508del mutation in the CFTR gene by zinc finger nuclease homology-directed repair. *BioResearch Open Access* 1: 99-108. [PMID:23514673](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23514673/)

3) Hollywood JA, Lee CM, Flynn R, Scallan MF and Harrison PT (2016). CFTR gene editing with CRISPR/Cas9 gRNAs: gene conversion tracts from double-strand break repair in human cells. *Scientific Reports* 6:32230. [PMID:27557525](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27557525/)

4) Sanz DJ, Hollywood JA, Scallan MF and Harrison PT (2017). Cas9/gRNA targeted excision of cystic fibrosis-causing deep-intron splicing mutations restores normal splicing of CFTR mRNA. *PLoS One* 12:e0184009. [PMID:28863137](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28863137/)

5) Schofield, J and Harrison PT (2021). Prime editing - an update on the field. *Gene Therapy* 28(7-8):396-401. doi: 10.1038/s41434-021-00263-9. [PMID:34031549](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34031549/)



Combining a histone deacetylase inhibitor drug with immunotherapy agents is safe, and may benefit some patients with advanced cancers that have not responded to traditional therapy, according to results of a phase 1 clinical trial involving University College Cork (UCC) and US researchers.

During the study, 33 patients with advanced solid tumors received the histone deacetylase inhibitor drug entinostat for two weeks. Then, some patients received the immunotherapy agent nivolumab, a checkpoint inhibitor, in combination with the entinostat, while others received both nivolumab and a second checkpoint inhibitor agent, ipilimumab, after the initial dosing with entinostat.

Senior study author Professor Roisin M. Connolly, M.B.B.Ch., M.D., chair in

## Inhibitor drug ‘primes’ the body to better respond to anti-cancer treatment

cancer research at University College Cork (UCC) and Cork University Hospital and adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins worked with colleagues in the **Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, Bloomberg-Kimmel Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy** and several other centers including University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, Yale Cancer Center and City of Hope in Los Angeles, which participated in study enrollment, and the University of Southern California, which collaborated on analysis of the data.

Checkpoint inhibitors, such as nivolumab and ipilimumab, release important “brakes” that permit the immune system to fight the cancer cells. The epigenetic inhibitor drug entinostat has been shown in preclinical models and laboratory studies (which led to this current clinical trial) to drive changes in the chemical environment of cells to make them more amenable to immunotherapy, says **Vered Stearns, M.D.**, director of the Women’s Malignancies Disease Group at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center.

The authors found that the objective response rate, or percentage of patients whose cancer responded to therapy, was 16%. One patient with triple-negative breast cancer had a complete

response, meaning a total shrinkage of the cancer. Because the cancer types included in the study are not felt to have high response rates to immune checkpoint therapy, these preliminary results are very promising. Treatment-related adverse events were mostly low grade, and included fatigue, nausea, anemia and diarrhea.

These results were published online in the June 16 issue of **Clinical Cancer Research**.

The most robust increases in CD8/FoxP3 ratio were observed in two patients with HR-positive breast cancer who experienced a partial response and stable disease. Three additional patients who experienced stable disease had adenocarcinoma, a cancer of glandular tissue.

The complete response in a patient with breast cancer “is a promise that there may be a role for this combination of therapies in breast cancers,” says senior study author Roisin M. Connolly, M.B.B.Ch., M.D., an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins and chair in cancer research at University College Cork and Cork University Hospital. “Immunotherapy hasn’t been as big a blockbuster to date in advanced breast cancer as in other cancers, such as

lung cancers or melanoma. This study paves the way for novel combination therapies that have the potential to improve response rates to immune checkpoint inhibitors in traditionally less-responsive tumor types.”

This drug combination is being investigated further in a group of 24 patients with HER2-negative breast cancer as part of the same NCI-sponsored clinical trial. “We are excited to have completed accrual to these ongoing studies in advanced HER2-negative breast cancer, and expect to report on these findings later this year,” says Stearns.

Study co-authors were Christine Rafie, Chenguang Wang, David Lim, Melinda Downs, Molly Geare, Leslie Anforth, Michelle A. Rudek, Qingfeng Zhu, Sepideh Besharati, Ashley Cimino-Mathews, Robert A. Anders, Vered Stearns, and Elizabeth M. Jaffee of Johns Hopkins. Other authors contributing to the study were from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine; the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute; Yale Cancer Center; City of Hope, Duarte, California; the National Cancer Institute; and the NIH Clinical Center.

**Above left:** Professor Roisin Connolly.

## UCC PAYS TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR GERALD O'SULLIVAN

University College Cork (UCC) has unveiled a plaque acknowledging funding from one of Ireland's leading cancer research charities, Breakthrough Cancer Research, to create a prestigious research position in memory of Professor Gerald O'Sullivan. The Professor Gerald O'Sullivan Chair in Cancer Research is named after the highly acclaimed surgeon, and founder of translational cancer research in the region.

Professor Gerald O'Sullivan first established the foundation structures to link cancer researchers at UCC with clinicians and healthcare specialists in the region's hospitals in August 1999. His aim was to facilitate translational cancer research with direct patient impact. A pioneering medical and research professional, his world-renowned clinical expertise was matched by his belief in the power of research to mould a better future for patients. It is fitting that nine years after his passing the Professor Gerald O'Sullivan Chair in Cancer Research has been established to build on this extraordinary legacy.

Professor O'Sullivan's wife Breda recently did the honour of unveiling the plaque, with her daughter Orla Dolan, CEO of Breakthrough Cancer Research and one of her two sons, Eoghan O'Sullivan, also in attendance.

University College Cork and the HSE SSWHG have appointed Professor Roisin Connolly as the inaugural 'Professor Gerald O'Sullivan Chair in Cancer Research' for the southern region.

The Chair is a significant strategic appointment for the region and Professor

Connolly will be responsible for developing innovative and competitive new cancer research programmes as well as contributing to the strategic development of high-quality evidence-based cancer services across the South/South West hospital group and its two nationally-designated cancer centres. This Chair will lead to the formation of a new Institute of Cancer drawing together and building on a multiplicity of successful strands in cancer research in the region, with the aim of improving patient care.

Professor Connolly joined UCC to take up the position of Cancer Research Chair from the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Centre (SKCCC) at Johns Hopkins University in the U.S., where she was an Associate Professor of Oncology and Co-Director of the Developmental Therapeutics/Phase 1 Clinical Trials Programme. Building on Professor O'Sullivan's legacy, Professor Connolly leads patient-focused, impactful cancer research which aims to improve outcomes for patients with cancer both nationally and internationally.

At the unveiling President of University College Cork, Professor John O'Halloran, commented, "I am delighted to welcome Professor Gerry O'Sullivan's wife Mrs. Breda O'Sullivan and two of her children Orla and Eoghan to this very special commemorative event and plaque unveiling where we honour a truly remarkable gentleman; Professor Gerald O'Sullivan. It is fitting that the Professor Gerald O'Sullivan Chair in Cancer Research has been established to build on his extraordinary legacy. The

support of Breakthrough Cancer Research aligns with UCC strategy of promoting excellence in research through well focused research and we strongly believe that a great number of lives can be saved and the quality of life for many people who develop cancer can be improved. For everyone in the world who has been touched by cancer or who has survived cancer it is important that we work together to find a cure."

Orla Dolan, Chief Executive Breakthrough Cancer Research said, "Gerry passionately believed in the power of research to improve cancer care and treatment; to save more lives. Proud to be from West Cork, he was vehement that ideas and research from the south of Ireland could make a difference on a global scale. It is wonderful to see this Chair build on that passion and drive and cement the foundation structures that links world class scientists and clinicians in the region on their common patient-focused purpose.

We are excited to see Professor Connolly's vision build on this strong foundation and know under her leadership, cancer research, education and care in the region will flourish."

Head of the College of Medicine and Health UCC, Professor Helen Whelton commented, "This new role is a superb opportunity to build on the legacy of Professor O'Sullivan. On behalf of UCC, we sincerely thank Breda, Orla and Eoghan O'Sullivan for their tremendous and on-going support. This is a hugely important appointment for Cork and Ireland and highlights the transformative impact that philanthropy



can have. It is of strategic importance in terms of our Alumni and Development programme and hugely enhances Cancer Research @UCC. It is one of a number of key hires in the cancer space for UCC, as Cork expands its footprint in this setting" Professor Connolly also commented, "Although I never personally met Professor O'Sullivan, his energy, drive and commitment to improving outcomes for patients living with or at risk of cancer is so evident from speaking to those who knew him and observing what he has built. It is truly an honour to take up this role, to move forward his agenda and unshakeable belief that cancer can be overcome if we can bring the best minds together and collaborate from the bench to the bedside."

Eimear Keohane, Head of Development, College of Medicine and Health said, "This support demonstrates the transformative power of philanthropy to create sustainable impact through research. We are very grateful and together we can create lasting and significant change."

**Pictured above (l-r):** Orla Dolan, CEO of Breakthrough Cancer Research, Breda O'Sullivan, Eoghan O'Sullivan, and UCC President John O'Halloran at the recent unveiling of the plaque in memory of Professor Gerald O'Sullivan.

## Bank of Ireland sponsors the wider delivery and evaluation of the ‘Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life’ digital badge in 2021-2022

‘Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life’ is a co-curricular micro-credential (digital badge) for college students at University College Cork, developed by Dr. Eithne Hunt, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. Over eight self-paced online sessions and informed by the relevant scientific research and theory in occupational science and occupational therapy, positive psychology and developmental neuroscience, students are guided to reflect on their own time use habits across the 24 hours of their day including sleep, self-care, play & leisure, study & work and how these influence their health and wellbeing, for good or ill. Habits of mind including growth mindset, self-compassion and joy and gratitude are also explored, as their presence or absence can enrich or undermine our daily experiences. Participants learn about brain and body health, and how to create and maintain daily habits and routines that support physical and emotional wellbeing for learning and life. Delivered in partnership with the UCC Skills Centre, this programme is an innovative example of a universal support in a higher education setting. It aligns with UCC, national and international policy and strategic priorities around student success and wellbeing.

Everyday Matters was one of two projects nationwide to be awarded a “highly commended” designation by the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland Ann Beckett

Award 2021. A poster reporting a feasibility study on Everyday Matters was awarded Best Poster at the 2021 Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland national conference in October.

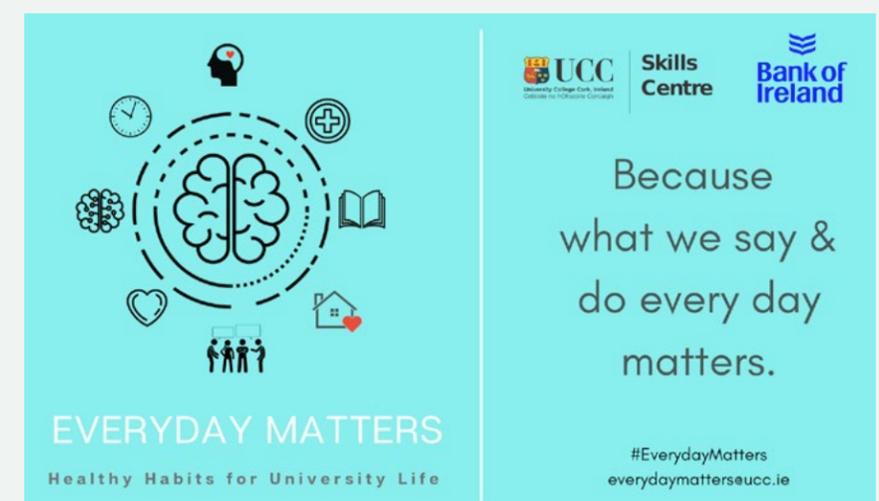
A video series was created in April 2020 to support all UCC students to apply the lessons of Everyday Matters to coping with life and keeping well in COVID-19 lockdown. Due to the popularity of these videos, further versions were created by request for UCC Admissions (for second level students across Ireland); Student Affairs Ireland (the primary national body supporting student affairs professionals in Ireland with a membership of over 600 professional services staff from across the Irish higher education sector); and for UCC Plus+/CIT Access (for 31 designated economically disadvantaged schools in Cork, Kerry and Waterford). The Everyday Matters video series was included as part of the submission from MTU Cork Access Service, UCC PLUS+ and ACCESS PLUS+ Schools Team that won in the Higher Education category of the Cork Celebrates Lifelong Learning Awards 2021.

The Everyday Matters digital badge has featured on the Network SMARTEN blog, Thrive Global and the Flourishing Education podcast and in a national seminar “Showcasing a Tiered Public Health Occupational Therapy Approach to Supporting Student Participation, Health, Wellbeing and Success in Higher

Education” funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

With the support of the Interim Registrar Professor Stephen Byrne and the Director of Student Experience Paul Moriarty, Bank of Ireland has generously sponsored the wider delivery and evaluation of the ‘Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life’ digital badge in 2021-2022. It will be offered to first and second year undergraduate students across UCC and PGR students in the College of Medicine & Health. Both quantitative and qualitative examinations of impact will be conducted, incorporating two Master by Research projects.

For more information please email [everydaymatters@ucc.ie](mailto:everydaymatters@ucc.ie)





### Dr Helen Lynch, and Professor Jeanne Jackson, Co-PIs on Horizon2020 P4play EJD

The Freedom of the City Project is an example of how collaboration and connections between the UCC research community and the City Council, can really make an impact, and create value for our community by working together to address UN sustainable goals of promoting well-being, addressing climate change and fostering inclusive cities, for our children and young people. Late 2020, Dr Helen Lynch and the team from the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy (OSOT) partnered with the Centre for Planning Education and Research, UCC, the Glucksman Gallery and Cork City Council to devise and implement a creative programme for children and young people to participate in the consultation phase of the **Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028**.

This innovative consultation was the first formal project in Cork city that worked to bring children

and young people's perspectives together to inform urban planning, and demonstrated an authentic commitment to including the voice of children and young people during this significant phase of municipal planning, consistent with Article 12 of **UNCRC**.

The project was launched officially in April 2021. Over 1,000 primary and second level students in Cork city expressed their ideas for a healthier, greener and more playful Cork city using **participatory methods including artwork, writing, and drawing**, in order to ensure that children of different ages and abilities could communicate their ideas in ways that suited them best. The final submissions represent children and young people from 24 primary level and 4 second level schools from Cork city and county. All artwork was displayed in the Glucksman Gallery in June 2021. A **film about the project** premiered at the Gate Cinema, Cork as part of the Glucksman Gallery' celebrations for Culture Night 2021 in September.

## Freedom of the City creative consultation project invites young people to inform the Cork City Development Plan

**Pictured left:** Students of St Marie's of the Isle with past Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr Joe Kavanagh. Photo: Clare Keogh/The Glucksman.

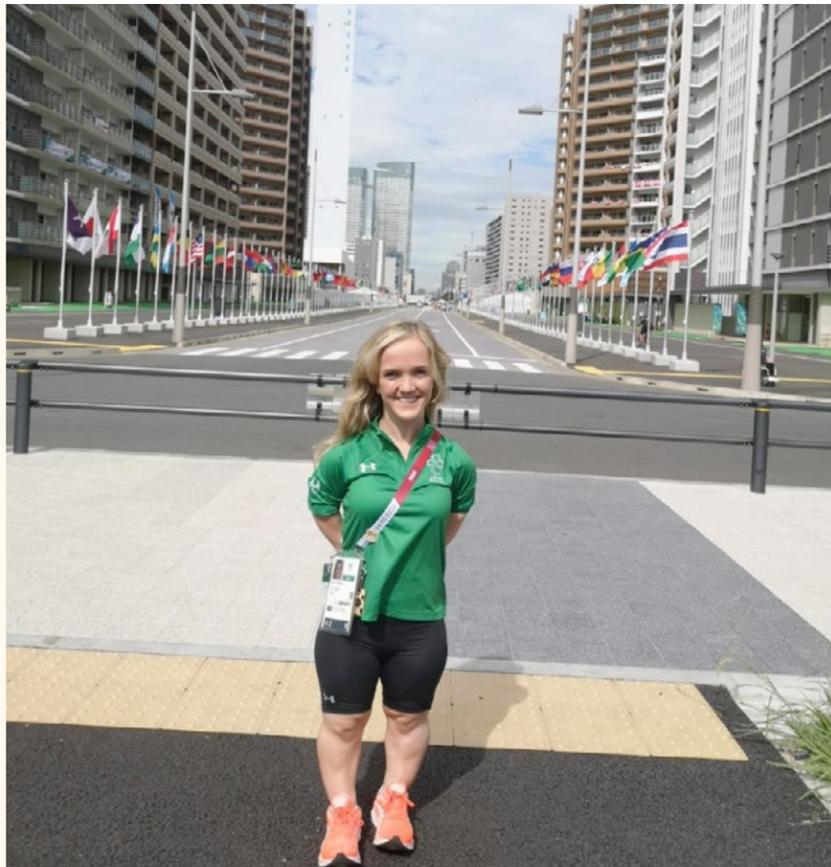
Led by Dr Lynch, the analysis team, including the P4Play researchers, then conducted a descriptive analysis for individual drawings, alongside content analysis of what the children and young people said in answer to the questions set. The drawing and written submissions called for Cork to become a brighter and more colourful city with more trees and open green spaces, and more places that children and young people can explore and play, such as parks and playgrounds museums, libraries; and more space for everyone to move about safely in the city including bike lanes and footpaths along with many other suggestions to address climate change, and make Cork a healthier and better city to live in. In October 2021, the Freedom of the City report was formally submitted to the City Council, to inform the Cork City Development Plan, on behalf of the children and young people. As Denise Cahill, Cork Healthy Cities Co-ordinator says: 'In a nutshell, this project personifies what a healthy cities approach is, or a playful approach is to city development planning and it has been a wonderful experience'.

The P4PLAY project brings together play researchers from across Europe and beyond, and offers opportunities for us to further implement play projects to enhance play for children in our communities. For more information and to keep up to date follow the P4PLAY project via our **website, Twitter and Instagram**.

### Analysis Team:

Professor Jeanne Jackson; Helen Lynch; Alice Moore (Irish Research Council scholar PhD candidate); and Deirdre O'Connor, (UCC Dept of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy); Jeanette Fitzsimons; Kelly Cotel; Muireann Carroll (UCC Centre for Planning Education & Research); and the P4Play PhD students: Allison Mula, Rianne Janssens, Fiona Loudoun, Ines Wenger, Michelle Bergin, Silvia Viegas Seijo, Thomas Morgenthaler, Sabine Vinçon.

**Freedom of the City** project team comprises: Denise Cahill, Cork Healthy Cities co-ordinator, HSE; Tadhg Crowley, Senior Curator Education + Community, The Glucksman; Jeanette Fitzsimons, Lecturer, UCC Centre for Planning Education + Research; Fiona Kearney, Director, The Glucksman; Hugh Killen, Planning Department, Cork City Council; Helen Lynch, UCC Dept of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy; Fearghal Reidy, Director of Services, Cork City Council.



Mary first encountered the shot put event through a para sport induction day when she was 11. Standing just over 4 foot tall, Mary has competed at several world junior games in countries like the UK, the Czech Republic, Portugal, and the UAE. She was selected to join the Paralympics Ireland High Performance squad in 2019 and her debut with the team was at the 2019 World Para Athletics Grand Prix in Grosseto, Italy, before competing at the World Para Athletics Championships in Dubai. Since then, she has added over two metres to her personal best.

She won bronze at the European Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland in June 2021 with a throw of 7.35m. She went on to

## Final Year Occupational Therapy student and Quercus scholar Mary Fitzgerald represents Ireland in the Tokyo Paralympics

record a throw of 7.85m at a meet in Belfast this summer, and on August 8th she finally broke the world-class 8-metre mark with a throw of 8.12m, putting her 4th on the world ranking list.

Mary entered the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics as the second youngest competitor. Finishing with a throw of 7.79m in challenging conditions, Mary finished in 6th place on her Paralympic debut. Although disappointed that she did not finish up with a better distance, Mary spoke about how she feels this is only the beginning for her and how she knows that she has much left to achieve.

“Competing for my country at the highest possible level was a huge honour and a memory that I will never forget. I worked very hard to achieve the A standard to make it on the plane to Tokyo, so I was delighted when all my hard work paid off. I also got the opportunity to compete against athletes I have admired for so many years - to be competitive with these girls, I proved it to myself that I deserve to compete at this level.”

Reflecting on what she will take forward from the experience, Mary says forward from the experience “being my first Paralympic Games,

I learned so much both about myself and the Games experience. I learned more about the type of person and the type of athlete I am, what works for me in the build- up to a Paralympics and what does not. Although every individual at the Paralympic Games has a common goal of competing at their best, we each have unique approaches, but at the same time, we can all learn so much from each other. I believe that being in an environment with like-minded people will only drive you on to be the best version of yourself.”

Mary knows that her Paralympic career is far from over. “Whether it’s between now and the next European Championships, World Championships, or Paralympic Games, my goals are to become functionally stronger, sharpen my shot put rotational technique, and overall become more established at the Paralympic level and get more experience competing against the top girls in the world in my event.”

Mary has commenced her final year of her Occupational Therapy studies at University College Cork, where she is also on a Quercus Sports’ Scholarship. She would like to undertake a Masters degree sometime in the future, possibly after the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

## Breast International Group recruits Dr Seamus O'Reilly to its executive board



**Above:** Dr Seamus O'Reilly.

BIG (Breast International Group) is an umbrella organisation harnessing the efforts and supporting the activities of 54 member clinical trial groups

globally. Collaboration is the engine of change and BIG's vision is to cure breast cancer through global research and collaboration. Patients in Ireland have participated in their studies for over 2 decades and many women in our communities have been cured as a result.

Dr Seamus O'Reilly, medical oncologist, has been selected as a representative of Cancer Trials Ireland on the Executive Board of BIG. He intends to use his term to increase access for patients to BIG studies, to foster collaborations with other BIG associated clinical trials groups, and to increase patient participation and involvement in cancer clinical trials.

## Professor Roisin Connolly gives inaugural lecture on translational cancer research

Professor Roisin Connolly recently gave a fascinating inaugural lecture titled *Translational Cancer Research: Improving Treatment Decision-Making and Patient Outcomes*. Professor Connolly is a medical oncologist and clinical investigator who was appointed as the Professor Gerald O'Sullivan Chair in Cancer Research at University College Cork (UCC) and Cork University Hospital in September 2019. Her lecture focused on advances in HER2-positive breast cancer, ER-positive breast cancer and the area of survivorship; through translational and collaborative cancer research efforts.

Watch Professor Connolly's lecture here:  
<https://youtu.be/O2qOjrUn15E>

For more information on the 2021/22 Inaugural Lecture Series, visit our site:  
[www.ucc.ie/en/med-health/inaugurallectures/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/med-health/inaugurallectures/)



**Above:** Professor Roisin Connolly.

## 2019–20 Irish National Drug and Alcohol Survey findings published

Findings of the 2019–20 Irish National Drug and Alcohol Survey were published earlier this year. The survey, which is the fifth such survey completed in Ireland, provides a valuable data source for examining tobacco, alcohol and drug use patterns, correlates of substance use and trends over time. It also surveys people's attitudes and perceptions relating to tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, and records the impact of drug use on communities.

Information was collected from 5,762 people aged 15 years and older across Ireland. The report's authors are Dr Seán Millar, research support officer and post-doctoral researcher in the School of Public Health, and Dr Deirdre Mongan and Mr Brian Galvin, both of the Health Research Board (HRB).

Some key findings from the report include the following:

- One-in-fourteen (7%) people have used an illegal drug in the last year. This hasn't changed since the most recent survey in 2014–15.
- There has been an increase in the number of people who use illegal stimulants (cocaine, ecstasy, amphetamines) and a

small decrease in the number of people using cannabis.

- 15–24-year-olds are most likely to report drug use. Men are twice as likely as women to use drugs.
- A wider range of drugs are being used since the previous survey, with 25% of those who used drugs in the last year reporting use of at least three different drugs compared with 15% in 2014–15.
- Cocaine use has increased across all age groups. Men aged 25–34 are most likely to report cocaine use in the last year, rising from 2% in 2002–03 to 9% in 2019–20.
- Nine-in-ten people support the use of cannabis for medical purposes, while less than three-in-ten support recreational use.
- In areas that are most and least deprived there is little difference in the prevalence of drug use, while communities with high levels of deprivation are disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of drug use activities in their local area.
- There are fewer smokers than ever before. The current survey is the first time that

the proportion of ex-smokers was found to be greater than current smokers. Health concerns, cost and health warning labels were cited as the main reasons for quitting.

- One-in-five drinkers have an Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD); this increases to one-in-three among drinkers aged 15–24 years. Drinkers with AUD were 13 times more likely to experience alcohol-related harm compared to low-risk drinkers.

Full survey findings can be accessed [HERE](#)



## Dr Harriët Schellekens embraces remote conferencing and hybrid work opportunities to communicate research findings



**Above:** Dr Harriët Schellekens.  
Photograph: B.Riedewald.

The legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic on the workplace has not all been doom and gloom. For **Dr Harriët Schellekens** the additional opportunities offered by hybrid work, online conferencing in virtual events and delivery of remote online talks, has meant a very productive summer of research dissemination, all while juggling the commitments of a family of three young children.

Dr Schellekens presented research findings on her work '*Translational anti-obesity effects of Bifidobacteria Longum APC1472 in high-fat-diet fed mice and overweight/obese*' to international scientific audiences speaking at five invited meetings, symposia, congresses and webinars. Along with colleagues Professors Cryan, Dinan and Stanton, Dr Schellekens identified a novel isolated bacterial strain, Bifidobacterium longum APC1472, which was able to reduce fasting blood glucose level, normalize active ghrelin levels and reduce the cortisol awakening response, which are dysregulated in obesity humans.

- Schellekens, H., Novel insights into microbiota-gut-brain signalling in reward and obesity, Gut Microbiota and the Brain Symposia, **FENS Regional Meeting (FRM) 2021**, Organized by the Polish Neuroscience Society and the Lithuanian Neuroscience Association, Virtual meeting, 25-27th August, 2021.
- Schellekens, H., Targeting the microbiota-gut-brain axis: Bifidobacterium longum's impact on obesity, **The Microbiome Connect: Nutrition 2021**, Virtual Congress, 2nd June, 2021.
- Schellekens, H., Targeting the microbiota-gut-brain axis: Towards evidence-based approaches

for metabolic and mental health, **International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP)**, Virtual meeting, 1st-3rd June, 2021.

- Schellekens, H., Mining the Microbiota: Novel Insights from microbiota-targeting strategies for metabolic health and mood, 3rd edition of International conference on microbiota-gut-brain axis, **Mind, Mood & Microbes**, Virtual Conference, 19-20th May, 2021.
- Schellekens, H., A Microbiome Menu: Targeting the microbiota-gut-brain axis for metabolic, cognitive and mental health, Gut feelings: Exploring prebiotics and the gut-brain axis, **Global Prebiotic Association**, Virtual Webinar, 24th February, 2021.

The research was also presented in a poster in the 8th edition of the International Human Microbiome Consortium Congress (IHMC) 2021, 27-29th June, 2021. And Dr Schellekens also took part in an Expert Panel Discussion in Emerging health opportunities for probiotics & prebiotics at Probiota Americas 2021, June 15-17th 2021 (Virtual online)

Dr Schellekens is a lecturer and Principal Investigator in the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, and funded Investigator in APC Microbiome Ireland.

Link to publication: Lancet EBioMedicine Research paper: *Bifidobacterium longum* counters the effects of obesity: Partial successful translation from rodent to human. [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352396](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352396)

## The PDRC goes from Strength to Strength

The Parkinson’s Disease Research Cluster (**PDRC**) is a multidisciplinary group of researchers and healthcare professionals, situated within the COMH, UCC. The current chair is Professor Suzanne Timmons, of the Centre for Gerontology and Rehabilitation (**CGR**), School of Medicine. The group is comprised of 12 members, whose disciplinary expertise include: health services research, psychology, pharmacy, neurology, geriatric medicine, the range of clinical therapies, and neuroscience.

The research conducted by the PDRC is planned and performed together with people with Parkinson’s, both locally and nationally, to ensure that the problem areas addressed are genuinely important to people living with the condition.

Some of the current topic areas that PDRC members are investigating include potential treatments and cure, diagnostics, medications, life-style factors, self-management, exercise, wearable technology for symptom monitoring, quality of life and other health outcomes, and health service access and provision.

This year the PDRC has been going from strength to strength, with several new and exciting developments:

- In February of this year, Professors Aideen Sullivan and Gerard O’Keefe (Dept. of Anatomy and Neuroscience) published a paper in the prestigious academic journal ‘Brain’, which has an impact factor of 11.3, and a large international readership. **The paper** focused on the role of neurotropic factors in treating Parkinson’s. In addition, an editorial piece based on the publication was published in **The Conversation**.

- In April, during Parkinson’s Awareness week, the **Cork Parkinson’s Association**, a dynamic and progressive local advocacy and support group, generously pledged €50,000 to the PDRC, to foster group longevity and seed several future Parkinson’s-focused research projects. This donation to the PDRC reflects the value of meaningful teamwork amongst those with shared goals, when the patient voice remains central to guiding and informing the process.

- Ms Leanne Ahern, a graduate of the MSc in Physiotherapy, UCC has secured an Irish Research Council ‘Enterprise Partnership’ Award to develop an exercise intervention with, and for, people with Parkinson’s disease. This PhD project will be supervised by Dr Ruth McCullagh (School of Clinical Therapies) and Prof. Suzanne Timmons (CGR).

- The HRB-funded ‘Mapping PD’ project has hit a milestone of 1500 survey responses from people living with PD across Ireland. This project, led by Professor Timmons and coordinated by Dr Emma O’Shea, aims to ascertain PD prevalence, map and characterise service provision, and to evaluate user experiences of these services, and recorded PD care practices/processes, against internationally agreed quality indicators. Dr Éilis O’Reilly, School of Public Health, is providing valuable epidemiological support on this project.

- Dr Erin Crowley, of the School of Pharmacy at UCC has been invited as a guest speaker at the Hospital Pharmacists Association of Ireland conference (to be held in 2022). Her talk will focus on the management of hospitalisation in people with Parkinson’s from a pharmacist perspective. Dr Crowley, with collaborators from the School of Pharmacy, also secured an NUI Early Career Academics grant, hosting a one-day virtual conference on *Targeting Therapeutics for Brain Disorders* in June 2021.

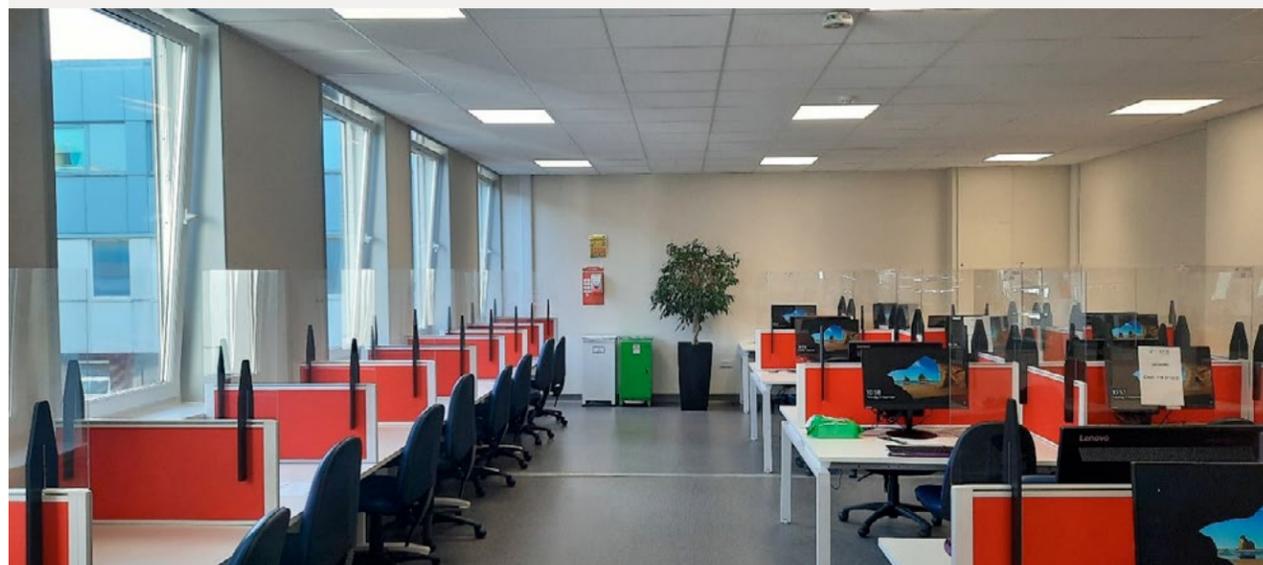
- **SENDOC**, an EU-NPA funded project on wearable technology for older people across Ireland, the UK, Sweden, and Finland has drawn to a close this autumn, but the collaboration between Professor Suzanne Timmons (CGR) and Dr John Barton (Tyndall National Institute), is continuing, with a leveraged industry/Enterprise Ireland partnership award for further development of their novel wireless monitor for PD.

The PDRC are happy to collaborate with any clinicians or researchers who have an interest in PD.

Visit [www.ucc.ie/en/pdrc/](http://www.ucc.ie/en/pdrc/) for more details of our current and upcoming projects.



**Above clockwise from top left (l-r):** Professor Cora O’Neill; Professor Gerard O’Keefe; Professor Suzanne Timmons; Dr Erin Crowley (left) and Dr Ruth McCullagh (right); Professor Aideen Sullivan; Dr Sean O’Sullivan; Dr Emma O’Shea (left) and Dr Siobhan Fox (right).



## HSE CUH Healthcare Library

The CUH Healthcare Library re-opened on Friday, 1st October 2021 and had its official launch on Thursday, 4th November. After an extensive refurbishment, we are delighted to have a bright, quiet and welcoming space for HSE staff and students on clinical placement, and look forward to supporting our patrons and developing our services in conjunction with changing requirements. If you haven't visited us before, we are on the 1st floor of the main CUH building, to the left of the Main Reception area and behind the Auditorium.

In line with current COVID-19 guidance/restrictions, we are not yet operating at full capacity but are able to provide a number of bookable study desk spaces in 2-hour time-slots, Monday to Friday only, offering a total of 32 bookable hours per week. Please see the [CUH Library page](#) via the main [HSE Library website](#) for details of these slots and how to book them.

To borrow print material from CUH Library, please contact us for instructions on how to register for a HSE CUH Library account. We

are currently providing a 'contact and collect' service as the print collections are not yet accessible for browsing. If you wish to access the HSE's electronic resources by setting up an OpenAthens account, please contact us to ask for instructions and to check eligibility. A recent addition to the Library area is our new Energy Pod – perfect for a quick break from your work or studies.

We are available to answer any questions you may have regarding using healthcare databases, searching for material and requiring advice relating to search strategies – phone us, email us or ask us when you are on-site!

CUH Healthcare Library:  
[cuh.library@hse](mailto:cuh.library@hse)

Library Assistant:  
Caroline O'Driscoll  
[cuh.library@hse.ie](mailto:cuh.library@hse.ie)  
(021) 4922 136

Executive Librarian:  
Ms Shauna Barrett  
[shauna.barrett@hse.ie](mailto:shauna.barrett@hse.ie)  
(021) 4922 729



## DENTAL SCHOOL STAFF PUBLISH NEW BOOK

Congratulations to Dental School staff on the publication of 'Clinical Cases in Gerodontology'. The book co-edited by Dr Frank Burke with Dr Gerry McKenna and Professor Finbarr Allen, both formerly of the Dental School, addresses the complex and challenging issues of providing oral care for the older patient. With the increasing elderly and dentate populations this timely book addresses the management of chronic oral diseases, the replacement of missing teeth, treatment of the failing restorations and the management of malignancy and other oral conditions. Using multiple well-illustrated case scenarios, the reader is taken through patient assessment and provision of care. Clinicians from Ireland, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Singapore and Brazil contributed to the book.

**Pictured above are the UCC contributors from the Dental School (l-r):** Dr Paul Brady, Dr Cristiane da Mata, Dr Frank Burke, Dr Martina Hayes and Dr Graham Quilligan.



## PhD researcher Alice Moore interviewed by the Sunday Independent about the accessible playground in the Crann Centre

Alice Moore, PhD researcher in the Department of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy, recently gave an interview to the Sunday Independent about the accessible playground in the Crann Centre.

Read an excerpt below and follow the link to read the full interview.

*Children and families we've worked with often say they don't visit public playgrounds. If you can't get into a space and be part of it and participate in it, then you feel you don't belong and that it's not for you.*

*Physical accessibility is the primary issue. Maybe the gates are wider, so you can get in, but then you can't go on anything.*

*One mother we spoke to got very upset. Her family don't go to playgrounds because she can't lift her daughter, who's almost 11, out of her chair to go on anything. Play is freely chosen and personally directed. If you put an adult into it, making it happen, then it's not directed by the child any more.*

**Full article**

## Professor Keelin O’Donoghue co-authors report on Implementation of National Bereavement Standards across all 19 Maternity Units



**Pictured above (l-r):** Professor Keelin O’Donoghue and Ms Riona Cotter.

INFANT’s **Professor Keelin O’Donoghue** has co-authored a report that aims to develop and improve perinatal bereavement care across all of Ireland’s Maternity units.

### READ THE REPORT

Compiled by Professor O’Donoghue, Clinical Lead for Implementation, and Riona Cotter, National Programme Manager, the report highlights the dedication and hard work of healthcare professionals, support groups and voluntary organisations who work with parents bereaved through pregnancy loss and perinatal death.

Titled *The Implementation of the National Standards for Bereavement*

*Care Following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death*, the report also acknowledges the work and commitment in each Maternity Unit to implement the standards, as well as outlining the work still to be done.

Speaking following the launch of the report, Professor O’Donoghue said that she was grateful to all of those who contributed to the implementation programme.

“This report shows that progress has been made in the implementation of the Bereavement Standards nationally. We are grateful to all the families and volunteers who shared their experiences of pregnancy loss and perinatal death with us Their experiences helped inform us of what is necessary to provide high quality bereavement care in our Maternity services”.

The final recommendations of the report are based on audit findings, expert opinion, best practice and the learning from experiences of bereaved parents and families, which should be a priority for every Maternity Unit.

## RESEARCH SUPERVISOR SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

The IUA Collaborative Webinar Series is a unique initiative, between UCD, TCD, RCSI, DCU, MU, NUIG, UCC and UL, which aims to support research supervisors through the forum of online webinars.

The programme of online activity runs from December 2021 - May 2022 and highlights approaches to common challenges, current practices, and pedagogies of research supervision.

Supervisors in partner institutions with all levels of experience, are invited to register for one, some, or all, of the available workshops.

1. Fri Dec 10th. 2-3.30pm. Successful Remote Supervision of Research Students - Prof Bob Harris, Karolinska Institute (UCD/TCD)
2. Fri Feb 4th. 2-3.30pm. Understand Brain Development as it Relates to HEI Students (UCC)
3. Thur Feb 17th. 2-3:30pm. The Same or Different? Supervision of the Professional Doctorate (UL)
4. Fri Feb 18th. 2-3.30pm. Identify the Risks and Opportunities of Contemporary Socio-cultural Contexts Relating to Students’ Learning (UCC)
5. Thur Feb 24th. 1-2pm. Mental Health and Well-being for PGRs (TCD)
6. Fri Feb 25th. 2-3.30pm. Supervising Research Students & Clinical Practice (RCSI)
7. Fri Mar 4th. 2-3.30pm. Navigating Supervisory Styles, Roles and Responsibilities (UCD)
8. Fri April 1st. 2-3.30pm. Supporting Academic Writing (DCU)
9. Thur April 7th. 1-2pm. Navigating Difficult Conversations with Research Students (TCD)
10. Fri April 8th. 2-3.30pm. Recruitment & Selection of Research Students - Top Tips (NUIM)
11. Thur April 28th. 1-2pm. Career Development & Networking for Research Students (TCD)
12. Fri April 29th. 2-3.30pm. The Research Student’s Voice (UCD)
13. Fri May 6th. 2-3.30pm. Explore Practical Strategies for Enhanced Student Success and the Development of Graduate Attributes through Curriculum Design, Learning, Teaching and Assessment (UCC)
14. Fri May TBC. 2-3.30pm. Managing Common Challenges in Research Supervision (NUIG)

UCC doctoral students will be involved in the ‘Student Voice’ webinar, and UCC colleagues, Professor Yvonne Nolan, Dr Samantha Dockery and Dr Eithne Hunt will facilitate the UCC webinars.

Please see the Events section of the **CoMH Graduate Studies** webpage for further information. Registration is through **Eventbrite**.



## Lecturers in the Department of Anatomy & Neuroscience deliver innovative 3D dental anatomy teaching and examination in Canvas

**Dr André Toulouse** and **Dr Mutahira Lone**, lecturers in the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, have developed an innovative blended learning approach which incorporates online 3D models for teaching and examining of dental morphology into Canvas.

During the past academic year, the implementation of COVID-19-related restrictions limited student attendance on campus. This introduced issues for the delivery of the AN2008 - *The Dental Morphology, Histology and Embryology* module, as one of the main learning outcomes is the capacity of learners to recognise the three-dimensional features of teeth and identify individual teeth. The module is usually taught using extracted teeth and resin models.

To circumvent some of the issues, Drs André Toulouse and Mutahira Lone, from the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, developed an innovative blended learning approach that included online 3D models for teaching and examining of dental morphology. The teaching material made available to students included a number of digital teaching tools such as lecture recordings, lecture notes, 2D dental morphology cue cards, but in particular 3D models of individual teeth were embedded in the Canvas VLE platform for study. The models could be accessed through an interactive dental charting grid, could be rotated freely by the learner and had key identification features labelled. Unlabelled models were also used during live interactive sessions with the lecturers and practice quizzes.

The examination was a Canvas VLE quiz where the students had limited time to identify previously unseen 3D models of a teeth and give the correct answer using a dental notation system. Results were in line with previous examinations performed using extracted teeth, suggesting that students have achieved some of the learning objectives. Feedback collected shows that the students used these 3D models extensively

for studying tooth morphology and that models were their preferred learning tools together with the live interactive sessions. The results of this study are published in **Journal of Dental Education**.

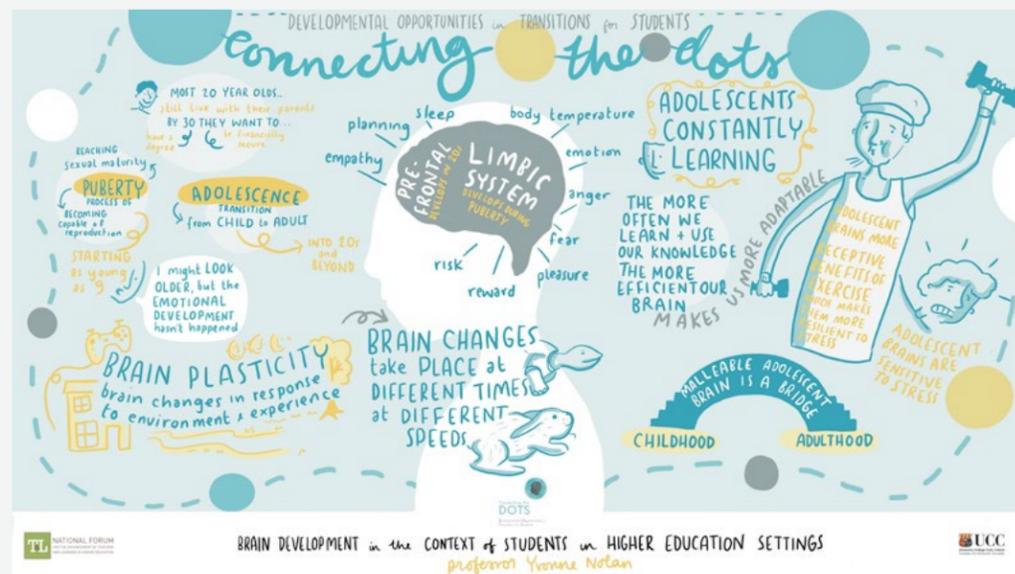
This is the first time that the Canvas VLE was used for 3D teaching and examination in the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience.

**The 3D models used for examination were created by a collaboration between the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience and the Cork University Dental School and Hospital.**



**Pictured above:** Dr André Toulouse and Dr Mutahira Lone. Photograph: B.Riedewald.

# Developmental Opportunities in Transitions for Students Seminar



Bookended by puberty and culturally defined adult roles, it is now established that adolescence extends from age 10 to age 24. In May 2021, the highly successful *Developmental Opportunities in Transitions for Students Seminar* organised by Dr Eithne Hunt (Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy / Graduate Attributes Programme, UCC), Professor Yvonne Nolan (Anatomy & Neuroscience/ CoMH Vice Dean of Graduate Studies, UCC) and Dr Samantha Dockray (Applied Psychology, UCC) explored the ramifications of this research and gave participants an opportunity to reflect on what this

information may mean for them within their work or role in higher education. This seminar was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

The inner workings of the adolescent brain and how these workings develop and are expressed in behaviours and engagement with the external world have been the focus of an explosion of research inquiry. Seated in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain, cognitive abilities such as decision-making, planning, self-control, social interaction and self-awareness are only fully developed by the mid-

twenties. In addition, the brain regions governing risk-taking and reward are intensely active in adolescence, and so influence behaviour, which is also shaped by context and expectations of others.

To realise student success, higher education institutions must take into account that the majority of their students are still adolescents, without fully developed cognitive, social, emotional and self-regulatory capacities, living and learning in a socio-cultural environment that offers less external regulation than ever before. The knowledge that many students in higher education are in developmental transition spotlights opportunities to construct academic and campus contexts that supports this transition.

Sixty-four attendees gathered across academic and professional services and HEIs nationally. Presentation topics ranged from brain development in adolescence, to risks and opportunities relating to student life,

and practical strategies for enhancing student success. Cross-sector participation was facilitated through panel discussion which included student voices. Opportunities for HE staff and structures to leverage the potential of developmental transitions that influence academic experiences and graduate attributes were discussed.

The seminar was well received by staff across a range of disciplines, in particular, attendees commented on the range of perspectives presented, the strong evidence-base, and the applied value of the content presented, as it relates to the students' experience in HEIs.

One participant commented that the seminar was "well organized and relevant. Inspiring and practical. More educators and students need this information. Truly one of the most beneficial professional development experiences I have had and contributed to in my career."

Building on this seminar and with support from the

National Forum for Teaching & Learning Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education 2019 and 2020, Eithne, Yvonne and Samantha have developed a digital badge, '*Brainpower - Harnessing the power and potential of the adolescent brain for enhanced student learning and success*' which will shortly be made available to academic staff and academic support staff across UCC. They are also in the process of developing '*Your Brainpower - Harnessing the power and potential of the adolescent brain for enhanced student learning and success*', which will offer students the opportunity to learn about how changes in the brain may impact their learning and experiences, as they transition through HEIs.

Seminar highlights:  
[www.youtube.com/channel/UCjfNujMIsb0JUNzaenNyJog](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjfNujMIsb0JUNzaenNyJog)

For further information, please email:  
[brainpower@ucc.ie](mailto:brainpower@ucc.ie)

## Professor Aideen M Sullivan appointed Head of the Department of Anatomy



**Above:** Professor Aideen M Sullivan.  
Photograph: Clare Keogh.

Congratulations to **Professor Aideen M. Sullivan** who was appointed Head of the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience at University College Cork, in March 2021.

Professor Sullivan, originally from Co. Waterford, graduated from University College Dublin in 1992 with a BSc in Pharmacology. In 1995, she obtained a PhD in Neuropharmacology from the University of Cambridge, UK, then worked in Imperial College London School of Medicine as a post-doctoral researcher from 1995-1998, on a project funded by the Parkinson's Disease Society. In 1998, she was appointed as Lecturer in the Department of Anatomy at UCC, and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2006 and to Professor (Scale 2) in 2014, the first such appointment in the Department.

Speaking about her recent appointment, Professor Sullivan says: *"I am very proud to take over as Head of such a vibrant*

*and dynamic department and looking forward to continue to progress the research and teaching activities. I am honoured to be the first female Head of the Department since it was founded in 1850. The Department has changed hugely in the 23 years since I started working here. Before I joined, there were four full-time academic staff, all male, as well as two female part-time Lecturers. At that time, the Department was located in the Windle Building on the main campus and taught Anatomy mainly to undergraduate medical and dental students."*

Professor Sullivan was instrumental in leading a significant expansion to the Department's interdisciplinary teaching with the establishment of the BSc degree in Neuroscience in 1998, the first Neuroscience degree in Ireland.

*"The BSc Neuroscience is now a very established successful and recognised degree programme, which saw its 20th class graduating in 2020."*

In terms of research activities, the Department has a long-standing focus on Neuroscience research. In 2010, it was renamed the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience to reflect the research emphasis therein. Its expansion and move to new teaching and research facilities in the Western Gateway Building aligned with plans to continue to develop an internationally-recognised research unit in the neurosciences, with a goal to advance knowledge, and to educate both students and society, on the mechanisms of and potential

treatments for brain disorders. Other research activities in the Department today include the research on the scholarship of teaching and learning in Anatomical education. Under the guidance of Professor Sullivan, it offers first class opportunities for postgraduate study and research and continuing professional development.

*"Our aim is to provide doctors, health professionals and scientists of the future with a world class, student-centred education, based on current knowledge, informed by research and with an awareness of societal needs."*

Professor Sullivan's own research activities are focused on the development of novel approaches to the treatment of Parkinson's disease. Professor Sullivan is an expert in investigating neuroprotective therapies, which have the potential to slow or reverse the progression of this debilitating disease. On this topic, she runs a collaborative research programme which has secured funding from a range of national and international organisations. This is highlighted by the recent award to Professor Sullivan and her colleague Professor Gerard O'Keeffe of funding from the UK trust, Cure Parkinson's, to further their research on the neurotrophic factor GDF5 as a neuroprotective therapy for Parkinson's. This study will use gene therapy to deliver GDF5 in an effective and long-lasting manner to the brain, in a clinically-relevant animal model of Parkinson's. This will lay the foundation for the use of GDF5 in clinical trials

aimed at stopping Parkinson's pathology from worsening.

Her research on Parkinson's led Professor Sullivan to be the founding Director of the Cork Parkinson's Disease Research Cluster and the vice-Director of the Cork NeuroScience Centre. Professor Sullivan is passionate about public and patient engagement and outreach and she led the organisation of several conferences on the topic of Parkinson's disease research, including the highly successful BRAINTALK Parkinson's Community Meeting and Art Exhibition in the Glucksman Gallery 2015. This event brought together Parkinson's patients, carers, clinicians and scientists for sharing of experiences and ideas - with plenty of art, music and dancing to ensure that all attendees had a very enjoyable and informative day.

Professor Sullivan is also very active in mentoring students and colleagues, and in the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in Higher Education. She participated in the Leadership Foundation's Aurora programme for women in Higher Education and in UCC's 'Through the Glass Ceiling' Programme for Female Academics and Researchers. She is a member of the University's and the College of Medicine and Health's Athena SWAN steering groups. She was Chair of the 'Flexible Working' group in UCC's successful Bronze Award in 2019.

Staff in the Department of Anatomy wish Professor Sullivan every success and happiness in her recent appointment.



**Above:** Dr Sinead Forde.

## DR SINEAD FORDE WINS FACULTY OF PAIN MEDAL AND GAFFNEY PRIZE

Dr Forde’s research highlighted that a strong relationship with self-perceived disability outcomes and self-efficacy for function may be clinically relevant psychological markers when treating cLBP. While a relationship between these variables and BMI groups need to be explored the novel work paves the way for further research to investigate whether there is a meaningful variance in the psychological profiles of cLBP patients of different BMI groups.

Congratulations to Dr Sinead Forde who won the Faculty of Pain Medicine’s Annual Research Medal 2021 presented at the College of Anaesthesiology Annual Congress in Dublin.

Dr Forde who was supervised by Dr Dominic Hegarty (Consultant in Pain Medicine & Neuromodulation, Mater Private Hospital Cork) studied the relationship between Body Mass Index (BMI), chronic low back pain and several psychological profiles. This work provides a better understanding into how careful assessment could streamline the management of individuals with chronic low back pain.

The key focus of the project was based on the fact that pain catastrophizing, kinesiophobia and self-efficacy have all been implicated in the development and maintenance of chronic low back pain (cLBP). We examined the relationship between these psychological profiles and Body Mass Index (BMI) in those with cLBP.

Dr Hegarty believes that this work is the first step into understanding this complex relationship. “The strength of Dr Forde’s work lies in the attention to detail and ensuring that validated and clinically relevant data was available for analysis.”

Sinead started this work as a final year student and over the last year graduated, worked as a frontline doctor through the most difficult time in the history of our health service, won the Gaffney Prize 2019/2020 for this work, presented at the World Institute of Pain Virtual World congress (WIP Rome 2020) and capped it off by winning the Pain Faculty Medal 2021! What a fantastic achievement when you consider the medal is usually won by Pain Fellow undertaking specialist training in the area of pain. We congratulate Dr Hegarty for his role in guiding Sinead and we wish Dr. Forde the very best in her career ahead which we know will bring many more accolades.

## 7th Annual Atlantic Corridor Medical Student Research Conference



**Above left (l-r):** Michael Vaughan (Poster Prize Winner), Dr Eileen Duggan (Medical Education Unit, UCC), Natalie Krakoski (Oral Presentation Prize Winner), Fionn Daly (Oral Presentation Prize Runner-Up).



**Above right:** UCC and NUI Galway oral and poster presenters at the 7th Annual Atlantic Corridor Medical Student Research Conference, which was held at the Clinical Sciences Institute, University Hospital Galway.

The 7th Annual Atlantic Corridor Medical Student Research Conference was hosted by NUI Galway School of Medicine on November 10th 2021. This interuniversity undergraduate research conference provides an opportunity to enjoy presentations on a diverse range of clinical and translational medical research projects completed across two of the ‘Atlantic Corridor’ medical schools – NUI Galway and UCC. This year’s varied and exciting programme consisted of 12 oral and 33 poster presentations, in addition to a keynote presentation from Professor Sean Dinneen, NUI Galway, and graduate of UCC School of Medicine.

The conference concluded with a prize-giving ceremony, where two awards were distributed for best oral and best poster presentation. The prize for

best oral presentation was awarded to Ms Natalie Krakoski, UCC, for her project titled “Defining the Therapeutic Potential of Class Specific Histone Deacetylase Inhibitions in an In Vitro Neuroinflammation Model of Parkinson’s Disease.” This project was completed under the supervision of Professor Gerard O’Keefe, Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience. The prize for best poster was awarded to Mr Michael Vaughan, UCC, for his project titled “Outcome Predictors for Oral Food Challenges in Children”, which was completed under the supervision of Dr Ioana Maris, Clinical Senior Lecturer at Department of Paediatrics and Child Health & Consultant Paediatrician, Bon Secours Hospital Cork. Congratulations to all UCC medical students who presented at this year’s conference.

## Winning health innovations from HSE-HIHI's Spark Ignite Innovation competition announced

Over the summer the Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI) and the HSE's Spark Innovation Programme hosted the HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite innovation competition. The HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite Programme 2021, was open to all 115,000+ HSE staff across all disciplines and departments. The overarching goal is to help staff from within the health service with a solution to a problem, challenge, or unmet need in healthcare, to validate the need, and determine if a market exists for their proposed solution, product, or service. It is a unique opportunity for HSE staff, supported by the commercial and industrial experience of the HIHI team to develop and to promote their ideas.

Over 180 applications with innovative ideas in healthcare were received from HSE staff nationwide. Following a rigorous review, 36 finalists were chosen to go forward to a bespoke HIHI innovation workshop delivered by Donncha Hughes (Start-up Hughes) and supported by the Local Enterprise Office Galway. All winners receive continued mentorship and guidance from HIHI to develop their idea further and avail of the bespoke HIHI Innovation pathway ([www.hih.ie](http://www.hih.ie)). The 36 finalists received mentorship from the HIHI mentor panel to bring their innovative ideas and solutions towards reality, and to prepare them for the regional pitching competitions.

The 12 finalists in each region pitched to a panel of experienced judges to win funding for the development or implementation of their idea. The judging panel comprised experts from

industry, venture investment, Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, public and private healthcare, and academia. Each regional final awarded five prizes: Best Individual Applicant Overall, Best Team Applicant Overall, both winning €3,000, and then three €1,000 runner-up prizes. The best individual applicant overall and best team applicant overall from each region qualified for the National Final on Wednesday the 16th of June. The winner of the national final for the individual and team category received a further €2,000 toward their innovation. The Spark Ignite initiative is funded by the HSE's Spark Innovation Programme, a collaboration between the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD), National Doctor Training and Planning (NDTP), the Health and Social Care Professionals Office (HSCP) and the Quality.

Improvement Team (QIT) to support frontline innovation and quality improvement across the HSE. The annual HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite competition is one of the key initiatives of the HSE's Spark Innovation Programme ([www.hse.ie/spark](http://www.hse.ie/spark)). The innovative projects submitted to the HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite competition included a variety of new products and services with commercial appeal, and healthcare service or process improvements applicable to any hospital or team, home and abroad. All of which have the patient and the care teams at the heart and seek to improve healthcare for everyone.

And the winners are:

### Best Individual overall winner HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite Innovation Competition 2021

Aoife Collins, a Senior Physiotherapist and Coordinator of Active Back Care Program in the Physiotherapy Department, Cork South Lee PCC, HSE with 'The Rapid-Access Online Active Back Care (ABC) Program'. Aoife plans to adapt and deliver her existing award-winning, evidence-based, group-rehabilitation program online via a customisable platform, provided by Salaso Health Solutions.

On receiving the award Aoife Collins said "I am delighted to win the prestigious Spark Ignite National Award on behalf of The Physiotherapy Department in Cork South Lee Primary Care. To be short-listed in such a competitive contest has given me the confidence to believe in my innovation and drive it forward. Winning this competition has shown me that innovative healthcare is essential to continuously improve HSE service provision, and that Spark Ignite offers the support needed to all front line staff to develop their ideas from a spark to their fruition."

### Best overall Team Winner HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite Innovation Competition 2021

Dr Kevin Deasy (Respiratory Special Registrar) and Dr Marcus Kennedy (Consultant Respiratory Physician and Interventional Pulmonologist) with 'Remote Learning in Bronchoscopy using a Low-Fidelity Airway Simulator' HSE-Cork University Hospital. Dr Kevin and Dr Marcus plan to develop a low cost flat-pack bronchoscopy and pleural ultrasound kit for home assembly and remote learning. Their ultimate goal is to develop a formal, well-researched simulation program encompassing real world and distance learning through remote video platforms using this flatpack simulator.

Dr Deasy and Dr Kennedy accepted the award saying; "We are delighted to be selected as a winner in this national final event and thank the expert panel. All presentations were outstanding and it is an honour to present in the same program. We would like to thank the HSE-HIHI Spark Ignite Project Group, Health Innovation Hub Ireland and Dr Andrew Cameron NUI Galway/Feellect for his expertise and mentorship. Finally we would like to thank our collaborators, Prof. Helen Whelton and Barry O'Reilly, UCC, Prof. Peter Dieckmann, CAMES Copenhagen, Prof. Roberto Casal, Boston Scientific and Boston Scientific Ireland."





## Dr Isabela Troya awarded IRC government of Ireland two-year fellowship for new study on self-harm and suicide in older people

**Left:** Dr Isabela Troya.

Dr Isabela Troya, School of Public Health and National Suicide Research Foundation, University College Cork, has been awarded the IRC Government of Ireland two-year Fellowship for the study: Examining individual and psychosocial determinants of self-harm and suicidality in older adults: improving risk assessment and management.

Mentor: Professor Ella Arensman

Annually in Ireland, more than 500 people die by suicide and more than 12,000 present to hospital following self-harm, of which 15% are older adults (aged >60). Older adults who self-harm are 20 times more likely to die from unnatural causes, and 67 times more likely to die by suicide when compared to their peers who have not self-harmed. Worldwide, the

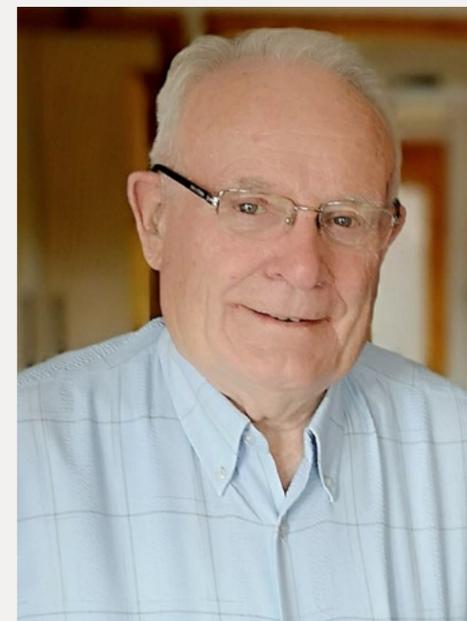
age group that is most likely to die by suicide is represented by older adults, in particular men. In Ireland, there is a lack of research into self-harm and suicide in older adults.

To gain a better understanding of self-harm in older adults, and to inform policy, patients, clinicians, and the Irish healthcare system, this research will address factors that lead to older adults harming themselves.

Building on her award-winning PhD and postdoctoral research to date on self-harm in older adults, this research will address the risk factors and risk profile of older adults who self-harm.

The research outcomes will impact self-harm clinical practice and policy in Ireland, which can be translated into international settings.

## FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE LATE CHARLIE FOLEY



Hospital, Wilton. He was the first person in Ireland to gain the Advanced Certificate, London City and Guilds in the Specialty of Orthodontics and also attained a rare Distinction in the examination.

A gifted, inspirational and totally dedicated teacher, he was loved and revered by all. For my own part, I have lost the finest colleague and friend. It was a privilege to have known and worked with him.

He is survived by his daughter Phyllis, sons John, Tony and Liam, seven grandsons and his great granddaughter, Charley. His loving wife, Sheila, had sadly predeceased him six months earlier.

*Suaimhneas na bhFlaitheas dá anam uasal*

Professor Mary Hegarty, Professor Emerita of Orthodontics, University College Cork.

July 2021 marked the first Anniversary of the late Charlie Foley, Cork University Dental School and Hospital.

Charlie began his Dental Hospital career in 1955 and was a key member of the Orthodontic team from 1963-1998. As Senior Instructor in Orthodontic Technology, Charlie taught generations of Dental Students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in both the Mulgrave Road and University Dental School &

## UCC CELEBRATES SIX ATHENA SWAN AWARDS FOR EQUALITY WORK

UCC recently celebrated more Athena SWAN award successes, recognising the University's commitment to promoting good practice and advancing gender equality in higher education.

At a virtual ceremony, Minister Simon Harris congratulated awardees for their work in advancing equality in higher education, and called Athena SWAN "one of the most important initiatives we have in higher education".

Three awards cycles were included in the ceremony, with UCC receiving six awards, including the Institutional Bronze award (awarded in 2019).

To celebrate this success, UCC held its own outdoor ceremony in the University's President's Garden, where President John O'Halloran presented Athena SWAN awards to UCC's School of Biochemistry & Cell Biology (2021 awardee), Dental School & Hospital (2020), School of Law (2021), School of Nursing & Midwifery (2020), and School of Public Health (2019).

President O'Halloran also accepted an award from Professor Áine Hyland for the University's institutional Athena SWAN accreditation, successfully renewed in 2019.

Congratulating the awardees, President O'Halloran said: "We are proud of the advances we have made in UCC through the Athena SWAN Charter, and exceptionally proud that most of the awards we celebrate today were achieved amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, with colleagues collaborating remotely on their submissions while adapting to radically transformed ways of teaching students and engaging in

research." Interim Registrar and Chair of UCC's Athena SWAN Steering Group, Professor Stephen Byrne, said: "These awards are a tribute to the work of the Athena SWAN teams working across UCC, and to the Athena SWAN Champions who led the successful submissions: Dr Anne Moore (School of Biochemistry & Cell Biology), Dr Cris da Mata (Dental School & Hospital), Professor Louise Crowley (School of Law), Dr Aine O'Donovan (School of Nursing & Midwifery), and Professor Patricia Kearney (School of Public Health (2019))."

Special guest Professor Aine Hyland, Emeritus Professor of Education and former Vice-President at UCC, who was Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker at the ceremony commended President O'Halloran and her UCC colleagues: "UCC's institutional Athena SWAN award is an internationally recognised accreditation, and

a hallmark of the University's commitment to improving equality and creating an inclusive University that values and respects diversity. Today's awards are a testament to the commitment of my UCC colleagues and their leaders to make tangible progress towards these values."

Dr Avril Hutch, UCC's new Director of UCC's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Unit, said: "We are delighted to celebrate these successful Athena SWAN submissions. We are grateful to the University and School Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Teams, Human Resources, Academic Systems Administration and all of the UCC staff and students who contributed to the process. The EDI unit looks forward to supporting the implementation of UCC Athena SWAN Action Plans - at institutional and School level - to promote positive gender practice through an intersectional approach."



## UCC unveils rainbow walkway to mark National Coming Out Day



UCC President John O'Halloran unveiled the UCC Rainbow Walkway on campus to mark National Coming Out Day on October 11th and as part of UCC Community Week. The UCC Rainbow Walkway has been installed to celebrate and recognise the diversity of the UCC community and to express UCC's firm commitment to the creation of a campus that is inclusive, where the whole of the UCC community can feel a sense of welcome and belonging. Speaking at the launch President O'Halloran stated: "This rainbow walkway symbolically recognises the inclusion of minority people in the physical landscape of our institution. For me, this institutional recognition represented so creatively and artistically, is so much more powerful than the sum of the coloured strips which make up the walkway. For me, it portrays an

unequivocal message to students, staff, family members, alumni, visitors and to the wider community that ours is a higher education institution that not only recognises the validity of LGBT+ lives, but celebrates their place in the academy. It also creatively and artistically symbolises our institution's zero-tolerance of discrimination and marginalisation."

The walkway was proposed by the LGBT+ Staff Network and supported by the Student LGBT+ Society, Student Union and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit.

Student Union President Asha Woodhouse noted: "While we celebrate National Coming Out Day and the launch of this permanent symbol of pride on the UCC campus, it's important for us all to reflect on how far we have come and to acknowledge that there is more work for us to do in order to build a world that is free from discrimination and marginalisation."

Speaking on behalf of the LGBT+ Network Dr Fiachra Ó Súilleabháin observed: "The walkway symbolises the progress made at UCC and nationally since the first LGBT+ staff and students groups were established in the 1980s (the first in an Irish university) by Cathal Kerrigan and Dr Joan McCarthy. UCD and TCD subsequently followed UCC's lead and established staff networks of their own. This helped promote and drive on UCC's strategic goal of being an inclusive workplace and reflected Joan and Cathal's life-long commitment to building an inclusive society in Ireland. This walkway is a direct result of their early activism."

**Pictured above left (l-r):** President John O'Halloran; Dr Avril Hutch, EDI Unit Director; Dr Fiachra Ó Suilleabháin; Daniel Byrne, UCC Students' Union; Maeve Richardson, UCC Students' Union; Dr Laurence Davis; Dr Barra Ó Donnabhain; Asha Woodhouse, UCC Students' Union; Cathal Kerrigan; Dr Joan McCarthy.

# MTU RAISES ITS FLAG

“The first raising of the Munster Technological University (MTU) flag, on its six campuses across the South West, represents a new dawn for higher education in the country” says Professor Maggie Cusack, President of MTU.

An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, Minister Simon Harris TD, and Minister Norma Foley TD, presided over the inaugural raising of the MTU flag on November 8th 2021.

According to Professor Cusack, the establishment of MTU has been an unqualified success. She said that demand from CAO applicants has surged, with first-preference honours degree applications for MTU courses rising by more than 16%, almost twice the national average, while first-preference degree application levels increased by almost 4%, a very positive outcome in a hugely important programme category. In addition, she said that the KTI Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2020 indicated that total research expenditure in MTU exceeded €22M, the highest total achieved across Ireland’s Technological Universities and Institutes of Technology.

An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD said “At a time when the world is facing major challenges in areas such as climate change and COVID-19, the importance of higher education has never been greater. We will need to maximise our ability to produce talented and responsible graduates who can lead, innovate, create, inspire, and transform. We will need these graduates in every village, town, city, and region in Ireland if we are to achieve the ground-up community engagement required to succeed in a sustainable manner. The development of Technological Universities is a key development in this context, and the establishment of MTU, in particular, will prove to be transformative for the South West Region.”



**Pictured above:** An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD speaking at the flag raising event.

With a further huge increase to come in the number of students seeking higher education opportunities across the South West, the establishment of MTU could not have come at a better time. Professor Cusack continued “MTU will play a leadership role in the strategic development of the South West region, and, in so doing, will adopt a global outlook and a civic-centric value system. MTU will anchor the development of the South West region, while participating fully on both the national, and international, stages. We will play a central and strategic role in ensuring that there are fantastic opportunities for all to achieve their full potential in education, in life, and in their careers.”

MTU has a student enrolment of more than 18,000 across 6 campuses and offers more than 140 programmes of study. Originally planned for January 1st 2021, the flag raising was deferred until such time as MTU’s key stakeholders would be available to participate in person in an event to mark the establishment of MTU and to recognise this key milestone in the development of Ireland’s higher education system. MTU is the first new university to be established in the South West since 1845. The College and the university look forward to a fruitful future of collaboration with our colleagues at MTU.