



Research Team of the Year 2021



Our Research

The Pregnancy Loss Research Group (PLRG) at University College Cork and Cork University Maternity Hospital, led by Professor Keelin O'Donoghue, was awarded 'Best Research Team of the Year' at the UCC Research awards in June 2022.



This multidisciplinary team is made up of doctors, midwives, nurses, administrative staff, social workers, chaplains, health services/population health/ social science researchers, and parent advocates. Funders include the Health Research Board (HRB), Health Service Executive (HSE), Irish Research Council (IRC), and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI).

The PLRG focuses on all types of pregnancy and infant loss, including first and second trimester miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, stillbirth, termination of pregnancy, neonatal death and pregnancy after loss.



Key Achievements in 2021

Broad dissemination of our research: publications, conferences, and media

- 29 journal articles; further 20+ papers submitted for review - 6 published in 2022; others under review
- 16 oral and 27 poster presentations at 13 international/national conferences/meetings
- 9 press articles (print/online)
- 1 book: *Different Baby, Different Story: Pregnancy and Parenting after Loss*
- 4 book chapters: In-the Oxford Textbook of Palliative Care for Children (Perinatal Palliative Care), *Birth & the Irish* (Pregnancy loss: A silent loss & challenging birth; Birth when life is short), *Systems Thinking for Global Health* (Stillbirth-Hidden Global Burden)



- 1 national clinical guideline: COVID-19 infection: Guidance for maternity services
- 1 report: Implementation of National Standards for Bereavement Care-Pregnancy Loss & Perinatal Death
- 3 policy consultation responses (Department of Social Protection: Revision of Death Registration Process; Irish Medical Council: Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners x 2)
- 2 policy briefs: Recurrent miscarriage guidelines; Definition of stillbirth



- Members featured in Síle Seoige's TG4 miscarriage documentary "Deireadh Tochta". Second most watched programme on the TG4 Player, 2021; nominated for Royal Television Society Ireland Television Award, 2022)



- Continued growth and maintenance of pregnancyandinfantloss.ie and corkmiscarriage.com

- 1 radio interview (RTE Radio 1-Morning Ireland); 1 Podcast (Open to Hope; 2 million subscribers).

Enhanced our research capacity; welcomed new members

- 1 postdoctoral researcher: Dr Caragh Flannery-HRB RE:CURRENT Project
- 1 PhD student: Caroline O'Connor-IRC MILESTONE Study
- 2 medical students: Samantha Ingham-Gender-Based Discrimination in Medicine; Felicia Deonarine-Stillbirth medical morbidity
- 3 Non Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs): Dr Emily Rutherford, Dr Sarah Kennedy, Dr Hadas Miremberg.

Strengthened collaborations and knowledge translation through membership of 32 local, national, and international advisory, advocacy and practice groups



- Clinical Advisory Group, National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP), HSE [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Clinical Lead for Guideline Development (Maternity and Gynaecology), NWIHP [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Cork University Maternity Hospital Bereavement Committee [Dr Daniel Nuzum-Chair; Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Orla O'Connell, Niamh Howard Jones, Riona Cotter, Dr Anne Helps, Dr Karen McNamara, Dr Brendan Fitzgerald, Dr Susan Dineen, Dr Laura Linehan, Niamh Spillane, Dr Deirdre Hayes Ryan]
- ELPIN (the Ethics, Law and Pregnancy in Ireland Network), UCC [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Riona Cotter, Dr Margaret Murphy]
- European Organisation for Treatment of Trophoblastic Disease Working Groups for Biochemistry-Genetics [Caroline Joyce]
- Executive Council Member, Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (IOG), Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Expert Advisory Group for the National Maternity and Gynaecology Clinical Guideline Programme [Caroline Joyce, Marita Hennessy PhD]
- External Advisor-Pregnancy After Loss Study, University of Manchester [Dr Margaret Murphy]



- Gestational Trophoblastic Disease National Guideline Development Group [Caroline Joyce]
- Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) National Maternity Bereavement Experience Survey Programme Board [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Anna Maria Verling, Rachel Rice]
- International Stillbirth Alliance Board [Dr Margaret Murphy] & Working Groups: Bereavement [Dr Margaret Murphy]; Prevention [Dr Margaret Murphy]; Advocacy [Dr Daniel Nuzum, Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Dr Margaret Murphy]
- IOG Specialty Training Committee, RCPI [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue-Chair]
- Irish Heart Foundation Nutrition Council [Marita Hennessy PhD]
- Men's Health Forum in Ireland, Men's Health Week Planning Group [Marita Hennessy PhD]
- National Cancer Care Programme, Steering Committee for Gestational Trophoblastic Disease [Caroline Joyce]
- National Neonatal Encephalopathy Action Group, Work Stream 4 Mandatory Training [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre (NPEC), Perinatal Mortality Committee [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Global Alliance for Newborn Care (GLANCE) Chair Committee [Dr Daniel Nuzum]
- National Screening Advisory Committee, Department of Health [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- National Specialty Training Director, IOG [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- NWIHP Termination of Pregnancy Clinical Advisory Forum [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Dr Deirdre Hayes Ryan]
- Oversight Group for the National Standards for Bereavement Care Following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death [Led by Prof Keelin O'Donoghue and Riona Cotter; Anna Maria Verling, Dr Brendan Fitzgerald, Dr Anne Helps, Marita Hennessy PhD, Dr Daniel Nuzum, Dr Stacey Power Walsh, Dr Ruth Rosingrave]
- Recurrent Miscarriage National Guideline Development Group [Dr Laura Linehan, Marita Hennessy PhD, Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) Stillbirth Clinical Study Group [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- START, Southern Taskforce on Abortion and Reproductive Topics [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Dr Deirdre Hayes Ryan]
- Steering Committee-iCHOOSE, University of Bristol [Dr Margaret Murphy]
- Stillbirth National Guideline Development Group [Dr Aisling McDonnell, Prof Keelin O'Donoghue, Riona Cotter, Tamara Escañuela Sánchez, Dr Jessica White]
- UCC College of Medicine and Health Graduate Studies Committee [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue].





Building capacity - mentoring and supervision

5 PhD students [+2 graduated, 2021], 3 Masters students (Public Health; Midwifery), 8 Medical students (3rd/4th/5th-year undergraduate), 3 NCHDs/Doctors-In-Training and 3 postdoctoral researchers.

Strengthened research collaborations locally, nationally and internationally

Through the various groups above (with academics, policy-/decision-makers, health professionals, bereaved parents/public), and also through projects such as HRB RE:CURRENT (PI: Prof Keelin O'Donoghue); SFI RELEVANT; IRC MILESTONE; COVID Placentitis; JBI scoping review on antepartum stillbirth (Dr Margaret Murphy); iCHOOSE (Dr Margaret Murphy).

International collaborations on COVID-19: bereavement (COCOON-Coordinator for Ireland; Stillbirth Centre of Research Excellence, Australia and other international groups); pregnancy (University of Nottingham-e.g. review; WHO Collaborating Centre for Global Women's Health, University of Birmingham-e.g. systematic review in BMJ), COVID placentitis (various).

Increased funding to support research activities in key areas (€229,765)

Irish Research Council:

- New Foundations: PLATFORM; €11,865 [Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Employment-Based Programme Postgraduate Scholarship: Gestational trophoblastic disease; €55,000 [Caroline Joyce; Prof Keelin O'Donoghue]
- Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship: MILESTONE Study; €72,000 [Caroline O' Connor, Prof Keelin O'Donoghue].

Philanthropy: PhD Project; €90,000 [Dr Emily O'Connor; commenced in January 2022].

Fulbright Ireland: Online course facilitation-Pregnancy After Loss for healthcare professionals; €900 [Dr Margaret Murphy].



“ The UCC Research Awards are about celebrating our excellence in Research & Innovation. UCC is a research intensive university and these awards are about acknowledging the outstanding contributions made by our researchers locally, nationally and globally. Congratulations to the Pregnancy Loss Research Group on receiving the Research Team of the Year award. ”

Professor John F. Cryan, Chair, Dept. of Anatomy & Neuroscience, University College Cork and Vice President for Research & Innovation

