



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

Volume1, Issue 1 – Summer 2008



**Back Row (from L- R): Dermot Bowden, David Mitchell, Damien Ferguson, Pat Kennelly, Brid Minihan, David Sheehan, Brian King, Mike O'Callaghan, Third Row (from L- R): Bernard Kenny, Kate-Marie Boyle, Charlotte Coyle, Danny O'Hare, Second Row (from L- R): Simon Kelly, Eimer O'Malley, Mary Sweeney, Anne Grace, Pamela Davoren, Claire Kehoe, Lee Yap, Kevin Glynn, Noel Mulligan, Front Row (from L- R): Niall Feeney, Eric Landymore, Sinead Carr, Siobhan Hinchy, Brian Kealy, Cormac O'Connor, Neasa Starr, Iain Feeley, Judi Lynch, Roisin O'Sullivan, Absent: Sam Thomas.**

**W**elcome to the first edition of the UL Graduate Medical School Newsletter. The purpose of the Newsletter is quite simply to inform anybody who is interested about the Graduate Medical School, particularly as it evolves over the next few years. Up until now, the medical school has involved a relatively modest number of people. We have just a few students (the 32 who enrolled in September 2007 are all still with us) and a relatively small number of full-time and part-time teaching staff. This is all about to change. In September 2008, we will have an intake of 64 students and this will further increase over the next couple of years. By 2010, we will reach steady state with an intake of 120 students.

In August 2009, the first cohort of 32 students will enter clinical training in General Practice and in hospital settings. Clinical training will involve a large number of clinicians as teachers, as clinical supervisors and as student assessors. The fact that our students and teaching staff will be distributed over a large geographical area gives added importance to the Newsletter as a means

of keeping people informed about and involved in the Graduate Medical School. By definition, a newsletter is meant to provide news. There is much news to share with you in this first edition of the Newsletter, particularly in relation to such issues as the construction of the Medical School building on the UL campus, the construction of teaching and research facilities on Clinical Sites, the on-going recruitment of Senior Academic Staff, the development of a research focus, etc. etc.

I very much hope that for each and every one of you, engagement with the Graduate Medical School will not be confined to this Newsletter. For the School to thrive it is crucial that all those with a potential role to play become actively involved. At any time, I'd be delighted to meet with individuals and/or groups to discuss any issues relating to the medical school and to how we might all contribute to its advancement.

Paul Finucane  
Foundation Head, Graduate Medical School.





### **Brian King - Class Representative**



As I write this article it is hard to believe we are at the end of our first year of medicine here in UL. Those early days of last September when we became the first medical students in UL seem like only yesterday. How quickly the year has passed and it is staggering how much we have done in that time. Previous to doing this course I was a Chemistry teacher in a girls' secondary school in Galway for 4 years, and I remember my initial hesitance at starting back into college life. Medicine is always something I had wanted to do, yet the thought of starting back to college at 26 years of age was somewhat daunting. However I

am glad to say whatever doubts I may have had were quickly dismissed by the enthusiasm and cooperation of all involved in the teaching of the course, and by the structure of the course.

There is never a dull day in graduate medicine. Every day presents something new to be discussed, talked through and solved, whether it's through PBL sessions, clinical & anatomy skills or lectures. We are taught to think for ourselves and encouraged to express our opinions. It is said your vocabulary doubles in your life as a medical student, I think mine already has in just this short time.

The days are long and the study can annoy me sometimes, but if I was back again in that room from last September, I would still make the same decision!

### **Problem Based Learning and the Role of the PBL Tutor in the new Graduate Medical School - Dr. Helena McKeague**



The guiding principle at the heart of the innovative curriculum in the Graduate Medical School here in UL is that of problem-based learning (PBL). The PBL process is collaborative, student-centred and self directed with the focus on learning in context. The students spend 5 hours a week in groups of 8 using clinical scenarios as triggers for intellectual enquiry and generators of learning. They work together to unravel problems, share knowledge, decide on learning objectives and report back to each other after a period of independent study. Formal lectures, clinical skills, anatomy sessions are all designed to dovetail with the PBL tutorials. The role of PBL tutor is really to facilitate this journey and to ensure that the student generated areas of study match the core curriculum. Over the last 9 months we have met 33 different "patients" and it has been fantastic to watch these graduates, from diverse backgrounds, working together in a professional and enthusiastic manner, gaining not only a good knowledge of health and illness but communication, leadership and decision-making skills that will serve them well as the doctors of tomorrow.

### **Open Evening**

An open evening was held by the school on the 7<sup>th</sup> March at 19.00 and was extremely well attended by this year's applicants and other interested parties. Prof. Paul Finucane, Foundation Head of school, along with a great number of the current students fielded questions from the audience regarding every aspect of the undergraduate medical curriculum and future employment of UL medical graduates.



Informative presentation were made by Brian King (Class Rep), Siobhain Hinchy and Niall Feeney of MedSoc, the recently formed students society. During a wide ranging question and answer session the audience learned that in St Georges Hospital Medical School it was the graduate entry students who won the majority of the final year prizes!



Photo on above:

Prof. Bill Shannon (Director of Educations), Mairead Waters (Manager) and Prof. Paul Finucane (Head of School), Prof. Shannon joined the school in February 08 from RCSI/UCD Medical School in Penang Malaysia. He was the first Professor of General Practice in Ireland when appointed to RCSI in 1987.

# Research at the Graduate Medical School

## Dundee Ready Education Environment Measure (DREEM)

In keeping with the ethos of promoting best standards of learner-focussed education, the first year medical class participated in a survey addressing student attributes and how they relate to educational experiences. The first such assessment was enthusiastically received by the inaugural class with a 97% response.

Early findings relate to students perceptions of the educational environment during the first semester. Ratings of the overall educational experience compared favourably with previous international experiences and identified encouragingly positive perceptions of the teaching experience, staff, and teaching environment. The survey was also very helpful in identifying ways of enhancing the educational experience by clarifying available supports to address student stress and better ways of providing feedback. Hopefully these positive early results will not lead to any complacency!

Further analyses will explore how learning styles and personality influence this educational experience and should provide more information that can inform the development of the educational programme. Thank you to all the students that participated.

Prof. David Meagher/Prof. Paul Finucane

## 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Research Forum

The 1<sup>st</sup> annual research forum was held in the graduate medical school on Tuesday March 11th 2008. The goal of the research forum is to make the graduate students aware of the on-going research opportunities in UL and to encourage them to actively engage in research leading to an M.D., M.Ch. or Ph.D. Degree over the course of their medical studies. Following a welcome ad-

dress by Prof. Vincent Cunnane, Vice President Research UL, some nineteen research topics were read to an audience of the first year graduate medical students and participant speakers. In keeping with the wide diversity of backgrounds among the graduate students a wide range of research topics was presented. The invited speaker, Brian Leonard, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, NUIG,

## CAMLA - Centre for Active Management of Lifelong Ageing

The Centre for Active Management of Lifelong Ageing (CAMLA) is based in the Graduate Medical School. It was established to support and foster research within the research community on aging locally, nationally and internationally.

The Irish research community on aging includes the Health Service Executive, the Health Research Board, the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) <http://www.cardi.ie/> and The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) <http://www.tilda.ie/#>. The Graduate Medical School is committed to becoming an active participant in national and international ageing research initiatives and is in the process of developing relationships with the key stakeholders in this area.

The Graduate Medical School was represented at the recent launch of the CARDI which has been recognised by

the governments of both Northern and Southern Ireland as a mechanism for greater collaboration among researchers on ageing and wider dissemination of ageing research with a view to better inform planning for an ageing population.

[http://www.cardi.ie/userfiles/Master\\_cardi%20report\\_draft\\_3\\_low.pdf](http://www.cardi.ie/userfiles/Master_cardi%20report_draft_3_low.pdf)

The Graduate Medical School will also be represented at the forthcoming TILDA conference on May 29th and 30th [http://www.tilda.ie/tilda\\_conference.html](http://www.tilda.ie/tilda_conference.html)

CAMLA provides advice and support to researchers with an interest in Lifelong Ageing. Currently a group of researchers interested in developing electronic aids to independent living has come together to explore ideas from a technological and clinical perspective; out of this meeting of minds has evolved the CAMLA - Connected Health Implementation Pilot (CHIP) which is a collaborative project being jointly led by medical and engineering researchers.



A section of the audience attending the research forum.



Attending the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Graduate Medical School research forum were key note speaker Prof. Brian Leonard NUIG and Prof. William O'Connor UL

Galway and Visiting Professor at the Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich, Germany gave a talk provocatively entitled *Depression as a disease of the immune system*.

Prof. Leonard's talk was well received by the audience and was followed by a vigorous question and answer session. Discussion and debate continued among graduates and speakers during a well attended light lunch in the Mill Café. As will be the tradition for this meeting the organisers have published an electronic booklet in the Series: Medical Research Re-

sources. The electronic research resource booklet can be accessed on the Graduate Medical School home page [www.ul.ie/medical-school](http://www.ul.ie/medical-school) and by clicking on Medical Research Resource Booklet 2008 or by clicking on [www.ul.ie/pdf/148888659.pdf](http://www.ul.ie/pdf/148888659.pdf). This booklet contains the full programme of the research forum including the contact details of the nineteen speakers, a brief description of each research area and the individual power-point presentations. Graduate students were encouraged to contact the speakers directly if interested in undertaking research.



The Centre for Prehospital Research (CPR) is based in the Graduate Medical School, UL and works to support and foster research in prehospital field of medicine. This area includes paramedic based research, land and air ambulance operations, resuscitation based research, and many other areas. The Centre was set up in partnership with UL by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council, which is the statutory regulator of the prehospital and ambulance sector in Ireland. CPR is run by Dr Cathal O'Donnell, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Limerick, with a half-time project officer, Mr Mark Dixon, ably assisted by the Centre's Administrator, Michelle Murnane. Those interested in finding out more about the Centre's activities or interested in prehospital research should contact Cathal O'Donnell at [cathal.odonnell@ul.ie](mailto:cathal.odonnell@ul.ie)

## Medical School Building

Plans are well underway for the new Medical School Building to be located on the North Bank of the Campus adjacent to the Health Sciences Building. Extending to just over 4,000m<sup>2</sup> the new building will provide a state of the art facility for the Medical School's students, researchers, faculty and staff. Designed by Dublin based Grafton Architects, this new building will extend over 4 floors. The spacious ground floor will feature a 150-seat lecture theatre, two large seminar rooms and a café. The first floor will be dominated by PBL (Problem Based Learning) with 12 dedicated PBL rooms designed for collaborative learning by groups of eight students. This floor will also include two computer laboratories plus a large number of individual IT work stations. The second floor will provide world class clinical and anatomical skills teaching facilities and will accommodate most of the School's high tech equipment and simulation models. Finally, the top floor will house the research laboratory facility together with offices and meeting rooms. Adjacent to the Medical School will be a new student residence with 50 en-suite study bedrooms. Commencement is targeted for September 2009.

## GMS Logo

In October of 2007 the GMS launched a competition to find a school logo. Over twenty entries were received and four finalists picked to pitch their design to the Advisory Committee. The overall winner was Aoife Barrett, a student of the Limerick School of Art and Design, who is currently working with Damian Clifford of One Little Studio design studio to bring the logo to completion. The logo will be launched at the next Advisory Committee meeting. The GMS would like to congratulate Aoife on her great win and thank all those who entered for their innovative and imaginative logos.

## Faculty of Education and Health Sciences Research Fair

At the beginning of the year, the Graduate Medical School became part of the newly formed Faculty of Education and Health Sciences (EHS) which consists of the departments of Education and Professional Studies, Nursing & Midwifery, Physical Education & Sports Sciences, Psychology, Physiotherapy, Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy.

A Faculty Research Fair was held on the afternoon of March 12<sup>th</sup> at the Castletroy Park Hotel. Prof. Orla Muldoon of the Department of Psychology gave a very interesting presentation with lots of advice and tips for those seeking funding for research. The fair consisted of round

table discussions on various research topics. The Medical School was well represented at this event by Prof. Bill Shannon, Prof. Billy O'Connor and Dr. Hemal Thakore. Prior to the fair, 150 research abstracts from across the faculty were collected and circulated in booklet form at the fair.

In her closing address, Prof. Mary O'Sullivan, Dean of the EHS faculty, expressed her hope that researchers across the new EHS faculty would capitalise on the opportunities for collaborative interdisciplinary research which this unique constellation of academic departments presented.

## Inaugural University of Limerick Medical Ball

To celebrate the first year of the Graduate Medical Programme, The UL Medical Society hosted the first ever Med Ball at the Radisson Hotel on 29th March. Students and staff from the schools of

Medicine, Nursing, Midwifery, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy were joined by countless health professionals from Limerick and beyond for a spectacular evening. Following a punch reception and delicious three-course meal, an impressive array of spot prizes were given to a handful of lucky guests. Thereafter, the festivities

continued with music provided by "The Roaring Forties" swing band and questionable dancing provided by the now jovial attendees. The special night then continued as a D.J. kept the dance floor full into the early hours of Sunday morning. All those lucky enough to get a ticket will undoubtedly be keen to thank Kate-Marie Boyle and her enthusiastic team for putting the wonderful event together.



**L-R Prof. Paul Finucane, Monica McLoughney (Ulster Bank) Mayor Ger Fahy**



**L-R Organising Committee Dermot Bowden, Mary Sweeney, Katie Boyle, Roisin O'Sullivan, Niall Feeney**

## Message from the Mid-Western Regional Hospital

**Prof. Declan Lyons, the new chairman of the Directorate of Clinical and Academic Affairs at the school**



The Regional Hospital complex has welcomed the establishment of the country's first graduate entry medical school and is very pleased to be associated with this novel and exciting medical school. The establishment of the school represents a very important opportunity for the delivery of optimal healthcare within the region. The University of Limerick has for many years collaborated with the Mid Western Health Board on a large number of research projects and the preparatory work for the medical school sub-

mission to the HSE was strongly supported by clinical staff at the Regional Hospital and other hospitals in the region. The MWRH looks forward very much to the first intake of medical students in mid 2009 and preparations are underway to ensure that the teaching facilities are in place at that time. In addition it is expected that the research academic output from the Regional and other associated hospitals in the region will increase significantly in coming years because of the recent development.