UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

School of Medicine

NEWSLETTER

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Consultant Neonatologist Sets Liquid-Gold Standard with UL PhD in Pioneering Breast Milk Research

Neonatologist and Paediatrician Professor Roy Philip, a pioneer in breast milk research, swapped his hospital scrubs for graduation robes, as he was conferred with a PhD in Preventive Neonatology at University of Limerick. Based in Limerick for over 25 years, Professor Philip has dedicated his career to the care of the tiniest and most vulnerable patients as Adjunct Full Professor of Neonatology at the University of Limerick (UL) School of Medicine and Consultant Neonatologist and Paediatrician at University Maternity Hospital Limerick (UMHL) and University Hospital Limerick (UHL).

Professor Philip's PhD in preventative Neonatology is the culmination of over 15 years of research into the benefits of breast milk, specifically for pre-term babies. "In Ireland, despite all the efforts up to now, we have one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world, so I wondered, if breast milk is so beneficial to the babies, how could we optimise it? When I started this journey about 15 years ago, the use of breast milk for our extremely pre-term babies in the neonatal unit at UMHL was less than 20%."

Over the last 14 years the unit has successfully maintained 100% of human milk exposure (including donor milk) for the tiny pre-term babies without a single failure, a success that Professor Philip puts down to the support of the entire staff, "We are so proud of the whole team, it's not something one person can do, this is a 100% team effort. I usually tell the mums of the preterm babies, breast milk is literally liquid gold. If you go to any shop, everybody is looking for superfoods, but nature has given us the most advanced superfood for a baby, and that is breast milk. No technology today can come anywhere near it, the immunological benefits, lifelong protection, none of that, it's nature's first vaccine and we are still only learning about breast milk," said Professor Philip.

Professor Philip's research in this space is internationally recognised and has been acknowledged on a global stage. In February 2025, he received the best clinical presentation award from The Human Milk Institute (HMI) at an event in San Diego, USA.



Left to right: Professor Colum Dunne (Head of School) and Professor Roy Philip PhD

Born in Kerala, India, Professor Philip had an interest in biology from an early age, an interest that developed into a lifelong passion for medicine. Studying at Kottayam Medical College, University of Kerala, in the 1980's Professor Philip gravitated towards Paediatric and Neonatal medicine. Based in Thiruvananthapuram Medical College in Kerala for his training, he could see the limitations put on the care they could provide to newborn babies, with the limited resources available to staff. The hospital staff there delivered over 10,000 babies a year and Professor Philip could see how "small interventions can make a significant lifelong impact for the families."

Minister Appoints UL Head of School of Medicine to New National Science Advice Forum

The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless TD has announced Ireland's new National Science Advice Forum and appointed 12 members from across healthcare and higher education. The NSAF12 panel forum includes UL's Head of School of Medicine, Professor Colum Dunne.

The Government Science Advisor (Professor Aoife McLysaght) will now convene and chair the National Science Advice Forum which will assist her in providing advice. Membership will be for a period of three years and participation in the forum is voluntary and unremunerated.

Professor Colum Dunne BSc (Hons), PhD, MBA, LLM, FRCPath is currently the Head (Dean) of the School of Medicine at University of Limerick and Foundation Professor and Director of Research. Colum has served as Interim Director of the HSE's Intern Network (MidWest). He served in two terms of the University's Governing Authority (University Board). He was appointed Honorary Professor at Queen's University Belfast in 2024. He is Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists (London) (FRCPath), Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland, and Royal Society of Medicine (London). He is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy Life and Health Sciences Committee (RIA). Colum is a Trustee and Council Member of the Healthcare Infection Society (London).

Colum began his third level education at University College Cork (UCC). He held senior research roles at Ireland's National Food Biotechnology Centre, UCC's BioMerit Research Centre & the Departments of Microbiology and Medicine in UCC following a period of research at Michigan State University, USA. Having been General Manager of a cancer research centre (supported largely through philanthropy) developing gene-/chemotherapies and innovative medical devices, Colum joined multinational Glanbia Plc as Director of Research and served for five years as a Director and member of the Boards of the Glanbia Nutritional group of companies.

He is an inventor on multiple patents, and was CEO and Founding Director of SoloPep Ltd, which commercialised an infection risk-reduction medical device for patients with respiratory illness. Colum has published extensively (>275 peer-reviewed articles). His research aims to better understand intestinal diseases such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, medical device innovation, microbial colonisation and infection, host response, healthcare associated infections, prevention and ways to mitigate effects. Further research focuses on medico-legal aspects of vulnerable populations.



Professor Colum Dunne (Head of School)

University of Limerick Uncovers Hidden Voices of Marginalised Communities on Policing and Safety Concerns



A University of Limerick research report has revealed the views of marginalised members of Irish society relating to policing and community safety. Led by researchers from the School of Medicine, the research has provided new insights from the marginalised communities most impacted by policing and community safety, both within Ireland and globally.

The report titled, "'Hidden Voices, Marginalised Community Perspectives on Policing and Community Safety," has identified the importance of community safety as a shared responsibility.

This recent work is part of a body of research led by UL over the last ten years. The combined research in this area has focused on how people from marginalised communities experience interactions with law enforcement, life in prison and life afterwards.

Some of the findings outlined in the report include:

- Community safety is not solely the responsibility of the police but also relies on trust between communities and the police, social cohesion, connectedness and integration.
- A multifaceted approach to tackling intergenerational poverty and exclusion and strong interagency cooperation, was recommended in the report.
- The report also highlighted issues around the multifaceted nature of policing, including mistrust, over-policing and the negative impact on communities of not reporting crimes.
- The need for new approaches to community policing and greater collaboration between Gardaí, health services and agencies at management level was also highlighted.
- Issues of racism, stigmatisation, misinformation and social media and intergenerational poverty were all outlined in the report.

Despite members of marginalised communities being overrepresented in the Irish criminal justice system and more likely to be victims of crime than those from non-marginalised communities, little was known about the perspectives of people from those communities in the past.

University of Limerick Uncovers Hidden Voices of Marginalised Communities on Policing and Safety Concerns Continued -

The experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, people from ethnic minorities, with disabilities, addiction issues, homelessness, autism and mental health conditions were all analysed as part of the research. Members of the LGBTQ+, Traveller and Roma communities were also consulted.

Professor Colum Dunne (Head of School) and Professor Gautam Gulati (School of Medicine Adjunct Clinical Professor) led the research outlined in the report.

Professor Colum Dunne explained, "This work stems from a wish to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders regarding community safety and policing in their specific contexts."

"Our ambition was to base this on real lived experience and to avoid both assumption and speculation. As a result, the report is unique and will, we hope, help to guide decision-making and policy going forward," added Professor Dunne.

UL researchers collaborated with academics across several Irish universities and various external stakeholders throughout the study. Stakeholders included An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive's National Social Inclusion Office (NSIO), Pavee Point, Peter McVerry Trust and the Irish Penal Reform Trust, among others.

Professor Gautam Gulati is grateful to all representative organisations involved and the people who shared their personal lived experiences with researchers.

"These insights will help us to understand policing and community safety in Ireland. We hope this research will meaningfully foster ongoing dialogue and inform Irish policing perspectives in the years to come," said Professor Gautam Gulati.

Referring to the publication of the Hidden Voices report, Dr Andrew Lacey, Superintendent of Henry Street Garda Station, Limerick said: "Hidden Voices is an exemplary example of meaningful research which provides front-line practitioners with contextual learnings and perspectives.

"It is important to reflect on what we can do better. These partnerships, along with this meaningful research, aim to bring together the full range of stakeholders in each community and make hidden voices become heard voices."

"This publication will provide policymakers and practitioners with qualitative data that can be used to inform policy development, improve service provision and recognise that community safety is a shared responsibility in Ireland," added Superintendent Lacey.

University of Limerick academics collaborated with several Irish universities on the research and funding was provided by Research Ireland and the Policing and Community Safety Authority.

University of Limerick, In Collaboration with University Hospital Limerick, has Officially Become a Member of The Organisation of European Cancer Institutes

This prestigious membership recognises UL and UHL's dedication to excellence in cancer diagnosis, treatment and research across its departments involved in cancer research. UL supports UHL in its mission to improve cancer care in the MidWest region through an emphasis on innovation for the enhancement of diagnosis and treatment and improvements in the experiences of patients and their families and carers.

This collaboration has resulted in the establishment of an Organisation of European Cancer Institutes (OECI) Accreditation and Designation Programme with ambitions to develop a complete quality system for cancer care, education and research in the MidWest.

The UL leadership team responsible for this new Programme includes Professor Colum Dunne (Head of School), along with Professor Rose Galvin (School of Allied Health), and Professor Amira Mahdi (Assistant Professor of Biomedical Sciences, Course Director BSc Biomedical Sciences), who will contribute to the dedicated education pillar of the Programme.

The Programme will also involve Professor Ruth Clifford (Professor of Haematology/ Oncology, School of Medicine and Consultant Haematologist at UHL), who will focus on the enhancement of research and clinical trial activity. Professor Clifford is also co-lead for the Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre, which brings together UL and HSE researchers dedicated to improving patient outcomes.

The OECI's Accreditation and Designation Programme is viewed as the gold standard globally, ensuring a complete quality system for cancer care, education and research. The accreditation process involves rigorous self-assessment against 87 specific standards followed by an on-site audit.

"OECI membership is one of the first stages in a journey to enhance all aspects of cancer care in the MidWest of Ireland. It emphasises the level of focus on, and investment in, this ambition. UL and UHL colleagues have a shared vision and aspirations for this OECI Programme," said Professor Dunne.

"The University's strengths in strategic leadership, research and innovation will be key elements in OECI success, and we look forward to meeting the many standards necessary for this accreditation. This achievement will highlight UL's consistent translation of our knowledge and expertise into real benefits for society," Professor Dunne added.



Professor Colum Dunne (Head of School)

Examination of Ireland's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dr Patrick O'Donnell (Associate Professor A of General Practice (Community Clinical Clerkship Lead), has contributed to a national examination of Ireland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by participating in a high-profile expert roundtable convened by the COVID-19 Evaluation Panel. Dr O'Donnell was the only General Practitioner among 11 Irish and international health experts at the panel's first live public session. The Evaluation Panel is tasked with producing an independent report on how the Irish Government prepared for and managed the pandemic.

During the discussion, Dr O'Donnell reflected on the intense uncertainty and personal strain experienced by staff in GP Practices nationwide, while also highlighting the extraordinary adaptability, collaboration and "can-do" spirit shown across the sector. He described the local adaptation of national and international guidance as a major success of the Irish response, particularly in maintaining continuity of care and rapidly delivering the vaccination programme.



Drawing on his work with marginalised and socially excluded groups, including people experiencing homelessness and addiction, Dr O'Donnell emphasised the strong efforts made in the MidWest to protect vulnerable populations. He noted that many people were eager to follow public health guidance and that collaboration between GPs, public health specialists and the National Social Inclusion Office helped tailor responses to real-world circumstances before the crisis escalated.



Left to right: Dr Mike Ryan (former Deputy Director of the World Health Organisation), Professor David Heymann (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), Professor Ivan Perry (UCC), Professor Sara Burke (TCD), Professor Mary Codd (UCD), Professor Steve Thomas (TCD), Professor Patricia Leahy-Warren (UCC), Professor Anne Scott (Covid-19 Evaluation Panel Chair), Dr Nat O'Connor (Covid-19 Evaluation Panel), Dearbhail McDonald (moderator), Professor Mark Woolhouse (University of Edinburgh) and Dr Patrick O'Donnell

Precision Medicine in Research

In April the MidWest Intern Network, hosted an Academic Intern Track (AIT) Study Day at the Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC), University Hospital Limerick.

The event, themed around precision medicine in research, was open to all Academic Track Interns nationwide. The day was formally opened and Chaired by Professor Daryl Butler (Consultant Paediatric Respiratory Medicine and Coordinator of the Mid West Intern Network). Over 30 AIT Interns attended the event representing all six Intern Programmes.

Our virtual Speaker on the day was Mr Peadar Waters (Colorectal Surgery Consultant, Cork University Hospital). Mr Waters delivered a presentation on, "Precision Medicine in the Field of Pelvic Exenteration for Advanced Pelvic Malignancy."

Dr Amirhossein Jalali (Associate Professor of Biostatistics) and Dr Kishor Das (PhD in Biostatistics, UL), presented on, "Designing and Reporting Quantitative Research."

Dr Amira Mahdi (Assistant Professor of Biomedical Sciences, Course Director BSc Biomedical Sciences), spoke on, "Improving Precision in Cancer Therapies: Resistance, Tumour Microenvironment and Patient-Specific Strategies."

Professor Ruth Clifford (Professor of Haematology/Oncology and Consultant Haematologist, UHL), presented on, "Precision Medicine in Cancer Clinical Trials."

Dr Rose Galvin (Senior Lecturer in Physiotherapy, UL), spoke on, "Exploring safe and Appropriate Alternative Care Pathways for Older Adults Seeking Emergency Care."

The study day provided an engaging and informative platform for the Academic Track Interns.



AIT Interns in attendance at the Mid-West Intern Network Academic Intern Track Study Day with Professor Daryl Butler (back row 5 from left), Professor Ruth Clifford (back row 6 from left) and Dr Neha Kudumula (Clinical Tutor, Mid-West Intern Network (front row first from left))

Psychology, Health and Medicine Annual Conference

The 22nd Annual Psychology, Health and Medicine Conference was held on 24 April at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), Dublin.

Organised by the Health Psychology of the Psychological Society of Ireland, in collaboration with the Northern Irish Branch of the British Psychological Society, its central aim was to promote psychology as applied to medicine and provide a platform for sharing high-quality research, policy developments and practical applications related to health and wellbeing. The School of Medicine was represented on the Psychology Health and Medicine (PHM) Scientific Committee by Professor Nóirín Lennox (Associate Professor A in Medical Education), who reviewed over 20 abstracts for poster and oral presentations, chaired a parallel session on health behaviour change and was a poster judge on the day. She provides here a brief review of PHM 2026. Last held at the School of Medicine in 2023, it is anticipated that the school will host this conference again in the coming years.

Held as a major one-day event with over 250 attendees, the conference centred on the theme, Health Psychology in a Changing World: Navigating Complexity, Driving Impact. This theme captured the increasing complexity of modern healthcare and underscored the importance of psychology in addressing behavioural, systemic and societal challenges.

Two keynote speakers delivered major addresses. Professor Rona Moss Morris (King's College London) spoke on improving care for long-term conditions and translating theory into practical healthcare impact. Professor Gerry Molloy (University of Galway) focused on the complexities of medication use and behaviour in healthcare contexts. These talks highlighted the importance of applying psychological science to real world healthcare challenges and Professor Molloy shared research publications that reflected collaborations between the School of Medicine and The National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway).

Other topics covered at the conference represented a wide range of issues including, management of long term and chronic conditions, mental health and wellbeing, behaviour change (smoking and medication use), dementia and neurodegenerative diseases, caregiving and illness experiences, health inequalities and marginalised communities, patient and public involvement (PPI) in research and Public and Patient Involvement (PPI).

A notable feature of the conference was its strong focus on PPI. Dedicated sessions explored how to embed meaningful patient input in research design and funding applications. PPI contributors, including patient advocates, played an active role in shaping the conference and discussions. This emphasis underscores a shift toward more inclusive, patient centred healthcare research and practice.

Overall, the 22nd Psychology, Health and Medicine Conference at the RCSI highlighted how psychological research and practice can respond to a rapidly changing health landscape. By focusing on complexity, collaboration, and real-world impact. The event showcased the vital role of health psychology in improving patient outcomes, influencing health behaviours and shaping future healthcare systems.







The SCOPE Project

A Student-Led Outreach Programme for Pain Education and Engagement

A team of academics from the School of Medicine and the School of Allied Health, together with partners from Chronic Pain Ireland, Arthritis Ireland and Men's Shed, successfully secured funding at the 2026 UL Citizen's Assembly. The UL Project Team included, Dr Nóirín Lennox (Associate Professor A in Medical Education), Professor Karen McCreesh (Professor of Physiotherapy, School of Allied Health), Professor Liam Glynn (Head of Clinical Affairs, Full Professor of General Practice) and Dr Steven Byrne (Assistant Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery)

On 30 April, the UL Citizen's Assembly was held at the Patrickswell Racecourse where the University and the people of Limerick joined together to identify three projects that would work towards developing Sustainable and Development Goal (SDG) focussed actions for Limerick. As well as being an opportunity for collective learning, the UL-CA aims to strengthen democracy and involve citizens in meaningful decision-making. It also provides an opportunity for UL academics to develop their public engagement skills and experience, while providing the public with a chance to connect with UL academics, ideas and activities.

The Process

The Assembly functions as a collaborative forum where shortlisted UL research teams present projects aimed at improving sustainability, community wellbeing, education, mobility and other SDG aligned priorities. Citizens then discuss, evaluate and vote on the projects they believe will have the greatest positive impact on the region.

How It Works

- Expert Panel Selection. A panel of UL and external representatives short lists project proposals for presentation.
- Interactive Pitches. Each project team has up to 10 minutes to present their idea in an engaging, educational and accessible way.
- Citizen Deliberation & Voting. 140+ citizens and stakeholders participate, discuss and vote on the most promising initiatives.
- Funding Awards. Winning projects receive support (€10,000 in 2026) to develop and implement their ideas in partnership with the community.

Purpose and Impact

The UL Citizen's Assembly strengthens University and community collaboration, ensuring that UL research is grounded in real community needs. It has become a flagship initiative of UL Engage, reinforcing UL's long standing mission to stay connected to its region and contribute to real world solutions.

The Assembly is a partnership between, University of Limerick, Health Research Institute (HRI), Limerick City & County Council, Limerick Public Participation Network (PPN), Limerick Comhairle na nÓg, Limerick Community Education Network (LCEN).



Left to right: Professor Liam Glynn (Head of Clinical Affairs, Full Professor of General Practice) Dr Steven Byrne (Assistant Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery), Martina Phelan (Chairperson, Chronic Pain Ireland), Dr Nóirín Lennox (Associate Professor A in Medical Education), Professor Karen McCreesh (Professor of Physiotherapy, School of Allied Health) and Dr Dympna Tuohy (Associate Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery)

The SCOPE Project

A Student-Led Outreach Programme for Pain Education and Engagement

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Outcomes 2026 - Citizens Selected Three Winning Projects

SMILE+ Project. Promoting multilingualism and interculturalism in early years education.

Givebackathon. Students solving digital challenges for local charities.

The SCOPE Project. Student led community outreach for pain education.

The SCOPE Project

The SCOPE Project aims to provide a space for people living with pain to gain opportunities for reducing isolation and loneliness, to socialise and to be supported, while at the same time providing a space for healthcare students to gain opportunities to engage with and provide education and activities for those suffering with persistent pain.

Addressing 4 SDGs. 3 (good health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable cities and communities).



Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre

The Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre (LDCRC) continues to strengthen its position as a major cancer research hub in the MidWest, now comprising 49 Principal Investigators (PIs) across the University of Limerick (UL), University Hospital Limerick (UHL) and Technological University of the Shannon (TUS).

The first half of 2026 has been a particularly busy and productive period for the centre, marked by PhD graduations, international research funding success, high-profile events and publications in leading international journals. Together, these achievements reflect the growing impact and collaborative strength of the LDCRC within the region and beyond.



Left to right: Professor Amira Mahdi, Professor John Noone (School of Allied Health), Professor Clodagh Scannell (School of Allied Health) and Katelyn O'Grady (3rd year PhD student, the Bernal Institute)

Researcher Successes and Awards

In January, Dr Michael Lynch graduated following the successful defence of his PhD, "Development and Benchmarking of Multi Modal Demultiplexing Algorithms in Single Cell RNA Sequencing with Application to Renal Cell Cancer."

Dr Lynch is now working as a postdoctoral fellow with his former supervisor, Professor Aedin Culhane (Full Professor of Biomedical Sciences (Cancer Genomics)), where he is leveraging spatially resolved next generation sequencing technologies to investigate differences between the primary and metastatic tumour microenvironment.

In March, Dr Sayantan Bhattacharyya was awarded the prestigious Marie Skłodowska Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship, one of the most competitive research fellowships in Europe. Dr Bhattacharyya is mentored by Associate Professor Nanasaheb Thorat, an LDCRC PI and co supervised by Dr Amira Mahdi (LDCRC PI and Assistant Professor of Biomedical Sciences, Course Director BSc Biomedical Sciences).

Dr Bhattacharyya's project, SCOPE, will use innovative lab-based organ mimicking models to study how treatments for paediatric brain cancer (medulloblastoma), such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy, can affect brain development and contribute to long term learning and cognitive challenges in children.

This award further highlights the strength and international impact of cancer research at the LDCRC and the continued success of Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellows supported within the centre.



Dr Michael Lynch PhD

Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre

Research Week 2026 and International Collaboration

The LDCRC hosted the event, "Cancer Research: Genomics, Nutrition, and Risk Reduction." The LDCRC was delighted to welcome Dr Paul Brennan, Head of the Genomic Epidemiology Branch, World Health Organization, International Agency, for research on Cancer (IARC), as keynote speaker.

The event was opened by University of Limerick President, Professor Shane Kilcommins and featured expert contributions from researchers across UL and UHL. Presentations examined the rising incidence of colorectal cancer and the key genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors influencing cancer risk and progression. During the event, the LDCRC announced that researchers from UL and UHL have been invited to lead Ireland's contribution to a major international study on Early Onset Colorectal Cancer (ECCE). Coordinated by the World Health Organization's IARC, the ECCE study will bring together researchers from 16 countries to investigate the increasing incidence of bowel cancer in young adults.

The announcement was particularly timely, coinciding with Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. Speaking at the event, LDCRC Clinical Director Professor Aedin Culhane emphasised the urgency of the issue, "The sharp rise in bowel cancer in those under the age of 50 is one of the most urgent questions in cancer research."

Visiting Speakers

The LDCRC at the School of Medicine were also delighted to host Associate Professor Helena Vasconcelos from the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, who delivered the seminar, "Understanding and Overcoming Cancer Drug Resistance."

Professor Helena Vasconcelos delivering her seminar at the School of Medicine in May

Notable LDCRC Achievements

» Limerick Cancer Trials, led by Professor Ruth Clifford, successfully randomised the first patient in Ireland into the QuFora MiniGo Medical Device Study, led by Professor Christina Fleming, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon at UHL.

» Limerick Cancer Trials also hosted an Investigator Initiated Trials Workshop at UHL, fostering strong multidisciplinary engagement and generating promising ideas in cancer survivorship and quality of life research.

» The PPI Limerick Cancer Research Group was featured in the 2025 UL Engage Annual Report, with contributions from LDCRC PIs James Brown and Amira Mahdi, highlighting the centre's commitment to patient and public involvement.



University of Limerick President, Professor Shane Kilcommins opening the LDCRC Research Week event



Left to right: Professor Ruth Clifford (Professor of Haematology/Oncology), Dr Paul Brennan (IACR) and Professor Aedin Culhane (Full Professor of Biomedical Sciences (Cancer Genomics))



Professor Helena Vasconcelos delivering her seminar at the School of Medicine in May

Medical School Contribution to Cannabis Insights

Cannabis Insights 2026: Advancing Health and Education at the University of Limerick, brought together over 80 colleagues from healthcare, research, youth work and policy. The seminar, organised in partnership with the MidWest Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum (MWRDAF), the HSE MidWest Addiction Service and Healthy UL, aimed to foster a more integrated and evidence-based understanding of cannabis use and its broader societal context.

The event highlighted both the growing complexity of cannabis-related harms and the urgent need for clear, biologically grounded education. Professor Billy O'Connor (Full Professor of Physiology), focused on the interaction between cannabis and brain function, particularly in relation to neurodevelopment, cognition and mental health vulnerability. The breadth of expertise in the room reinforced a central message: no single discipline can adequately address the challenges posed by contemporary cannabis use. The concluding panel discussion further underscored the importance of sustained collaboration across sectors.

For medical educators and students alike, the seminar served as a reminder that cannabis is not a static issue but an evolving public health concern. Continued interdisciplinary dialogue like this will be essential in equipping future clinicians with the knowledge and critical perspective required to respond effectively.



Left to right: Professor Billy O'Connor, Eliza Kurcevič-Ramonė (European Union Drugs Agency, EUDA), Dr Sancha Power (HSE Midwest Addiction Service), Detective Superintendent Sé McCormack (Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau), Helen Ryan (Co-ordinator of MWRDAF), Mr Rory Keane (Co-ordinator HSE Midwest Addiction Service) and Dr Eva Devaney (Healthy UL and Seminar Organiser)

Updates from the Participatory Health Research (PHR) Unit

By Jessica Masira
(Research Assistant, ARISE Study)

The Essential Role of Peer Researchers in Participatory Health Research with Ethnic Minority Women

The Study

The ARISE Study focuses on women's reproductive health, through the exploration of issues related to consent, decision-making and autonomy among ethnic minority women aged 18 and over who have accessed healthcare services in Ireland. The study is funded by the Department of Health (Women's Health Action Fund). Participants have been drawn from Ukrainian, Roma, sub-Saharan African, Arabic-speaking and Irish Traveller communities. The study employs an innovative peer research model that facilitates the inclusion of migrant and ethnic minority women who are often considered "hard to reach". The methods employed in the Study includes focus group discussions, one-on-one interviews and arts-based workshops focusing on ethnic minority women's experiences of reproductive healthcare in Ireland.

Who are the Peer Researchers?

ARISE recognises a peer researcher as a member of the team who has lived experience within any of the ethnic minority communities included in the Study. The six peer researchers are essential to the project due to their ability to communicate in the participants' language and their connection to ethnic minority communities. The ARISE peer researchers are employed as part-time research assistants and enjoy all the benefits of the academic institution, such as continuous capacity/talent development. ARISE values the peer researchers as equal partners in the project and this fosters a strong sense of belonging, commitment to work and team cohesion.

Peer Researcher Role

The peer researchers serve as key channels of engagement with their communities. They help to build trust and rapport on sensitive topics where participants would otherwise feel exposed. Sharing similar experiences helps normalise what would otherwise be difficult topics to talk about. Shared experiences can help participants feel that they are not alone, which can reduce perceived power imbalances between researchers and participants and set a safe space for sharing.

The peer researchers are prepared and equipped for their role through continuous training and involvement in co-designing the fieldwork tools, ensuring that all methods used are sensitive and appropriate for different communities. The team meets regularly online and in person and works through any arising issues collaboratively. Peer researchers also present the study methodology and findings at national and international conferences.



Left to right: Tetiana Kinchevska, Dr Susann Huschke, Chipo Harper, Tebyan Dalil, Mags Casey, Emma Plesca and Jessica Masira



Dr Susann Huschke and Tetiana Kinchesvka co-presenting the ARISE Study peer research design at the INMO Inclusion Health Conference

Updates from the Participatory Health Research (PHR) Unit

WHO Collaborating Centres Global Forum

In early April, the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centres Global Forum took place in Lyon, bringing together over 800 WHO Collaborating Centres (CCs) from across the world, united by a shared commitment to advancing global public health.

The Forum surfaced some urgent realities. While nearly 200 CCs operate across the Western Pacific and over 300 across Europe, only 25 serve the African region, the region carrying the greatest burden of disease. Expanding representation there is a priority that was well voiced by many participants.

Several themes recurred throughout the three days. The importance of capacity-building and cross-regional collaboration, the need to combat misinformation and the value of multilateral cooperation. A strong thread captured in a session on planning for the future was the concept of back casting, imagining the world we want in five to ten years time and working backwards to identify the actions needed to get there. In a time when science feels under pressure, this kind of intentional, futures-oriented thinking engaged many members.

Ireland was well represented with 5 Collaborating Centres from across the country in attendance. The CC for Longitudinal Studies on Ageing & Life Course (Trinity College Dublin), the CC for Nursing Regulation & CPD (Royal College of Surgeons Ireland), the CC for Surveillance & Research in Suicide Prevention (University College Cork), the CC for One Health (University College Dublin) and the CC for Participatory Health Research with Refugees & Migrants (University of Limerick). in the closing session of the Forum, Dr Tony Holohan (Director of the CC for One Health) delivered a timely reminder that implementation happens on the ground, in communities and hospitals and that designing for real-world delivery, not just best practice, is what makes health systems truly equitable.

The Forum presented the first opportunity for Irish CCs to connect and plans are underway to establish a national CC network, while connections forged with CCs in Chile, Sweden and Italy underscore the need for an intensified focus on migration health.



Representatives from the Irish WHO Collaborating Centres at the WHO Collaborating Centres Global Forum in Lyon

Updates from eHealth-Hub

All Island Cancer Data Forum

The 2026 All Island Cancer Data Forum, hosted by the All Island eHealth Hub for Cancer at Queen's University Belfast, brought together policymakers, researchers, clinicians, industry partners and patient advocates from across Ireland and beyond. The shared goal, advancing data driven, patient centred cancer care.

With cancer incidence rising and data systems still fragmented, speakers highlighted the urgent need for interoperable infrastructure, aligned governance and coordinated investment to support readiness for both the European Health Data Space (EHDS) and the UK Health Data Research Service (HDRS). Presentations demonstrated how connected, high quality cancer data can improve outcomes, strengthen clinical decision making and deliver major health system efficiencies. Discussions on trusted research environments reinforced the importance of secure, federated approaches to data use across jurisdictions.

A dedicated Conroy–Hastings Memorial Session underscored that patients and their data must remain central to digital cancer transformation. Speakers emphasised strong public demand for real time access to personal health information, the value of co designed digital systems and the need for trustworthy governance that balances privacy with meaningful use. Examples from Northern Ireland's rapid digital progress and emerging work in under reported areas such as blood cancer showed what is possible when leadership, collaboration and patient involvement align. The Forum closed with a clear consensus; cancer data must be translated into actionable intelligence that improves research, care and outcomes across the island, strengthening readiness for future all island and European collaboration. Read the full conference report **here**.



Left to right: Professor Mark Lawler (Queen's University Belfast), Margaret Grayson (Northern Ireland Cancer Research Consumer Forum), Minister Mike Nesbitt (Minister for Health Northern Ireland), Miriam Staunton (UCAN Ireland) and Professor Aedin Culhane (Full Professor of Biomedical Sciences (Cancer Genomics)).

Updates from eHealth-Hub



Left to right: Dr Stelios Theophanous (University of Leeds), Dr Catherine Mahoney (Eli Lilly), Professor Geoff Hall (University of Leeds), Professor Aedin Culhane, Professor Mark Lawler (Queen's University Belfast) and Professor Dani Prieto Alhambra (University of Oxford)

For more information, visit the eHealth Hub for Cancer **website.**

OHDSI Ireland Activities

OHDSI Ireland marked a major milestone at the Forum with its first in person community meeting and a hands on workshop delivered through the eHealth Hub for Cancer. As the all island Irish node of the global OHDSI network, the group is focused on building shared capability in real world health data.

The workshop introduced participants to the OMOP Common Data Model and federated analysis approaches that enable high quality research while maintaining local data control. With OMOP now a key standard across EHDS, HDR UK and DARWIN EU, the session drew strong engagement and highlighted growing demand for aligned skills to support future cancer data infrastructure. The OHDSI Ireland seminar series continues to expand the community, featuring contributions from Irish, European and US collaborators, including recent talks on OMOP adoption in cancer research and large scale multinational cohort studies.

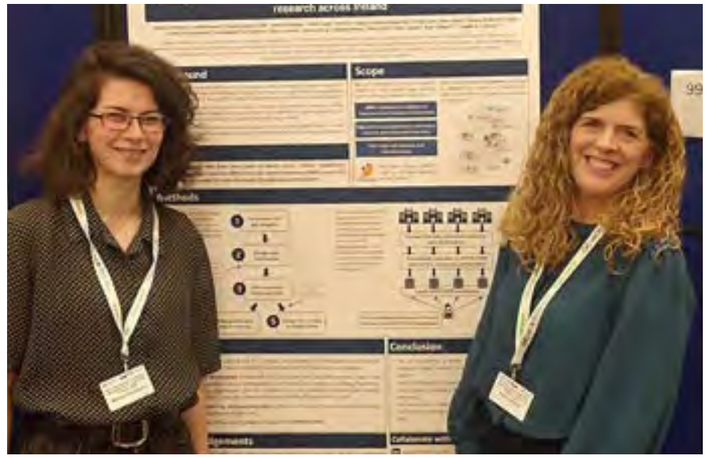
Members also participated in the OHDSI Europe Symposium in Rotterdam, presenting both oral and poster contributions that showcased Ireland's growing role within the wider network. Together, these activities reflect a rapidly strengthening all island community committed to advancing standards based real world evidence for cancer research and digital health transformation.

Updates from eHealth-Hub

ECR Programme: Updates and Engagement

Our early career researchers have been actively sharing their work across major forums this year.

- **Brendan Reardon** presented "Towards an All Island Precision Oncology Knowledge Base" at the Cancer Data Forum and is lead author of a Nature Reviews Cancer article on integrating AI and Genomics for Precision Oncology, developed through his work with the Van Allen Lab (Dana Farber) and UL.
- **Dibya Mohanty** showcased research on the B7 immune checkpoint family at the Forum and delivered a School of Medicine seminar on Mammalian Immune Checkpoint Evolution.
- **Marina Ainciburu** presented posters in Belfast, Galway (IACR), and at the OHDSI Europe Symposium in Rotterdam, where she also completed training.
- **Abhishek Nayak and Alexandru Mahmoud** represented the GDI Ireland node at the Genomic Data Infrastructure workshop in Finland, where they successfully deployed a GA4GH Beacon using synthetic Genome of Europe compliant data. This advances Ireland's readiness for secure, federated genomic data discovery and future European scale research.



Left to right: Dr Marina Ainciburu (University of Limerick) and Professor Aedin Culhane, at Galway AICR 2026



GDI Technical Workshop group photo

CLL17 Cancer Clinical Trials

Limerick Cancer Trials is a collaborative partnership between University Hospital Limerick (UHL) and the University of Limerick (UL), supported by the Health Research Board. Led by Professor Ruth Clifford (Professor of Haematology/Oncology), they deliver innovative clinical trials and translational research that bring the latest advances in cancer care directly to patients across the MidWest.

The partnership works with clinicians, researchers and national and international partners to design, deliver and support cancer clinical trials across a broad range of disease areas. A key priority for Limerick Cancer Trials is to ensure that patients in the MidWest have equitable access to cutting-edge therapies and innovative research opportunities.

In partnership with the Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre (LDCRC), supported by the Health Research Institute, we have established a growing cancer research programme with an expanding track record of peer-reviewed publications and collaborative studies. Recent work has focused on improving inclusion in clinical trials, including addressing the underrepresentation of key patient groups such as older adults.

To learn more about Limerick Cancer Trials or to get involved in cancer research, visit www.limerickcancertrials.ie or follow us on Linkedin.

Translating Research into Care: The Impact of the CLL17 Trial

The CLL17 trial highlights the impact of cancer clinical trials in advancing patient care, demonstrating how participation in international research can lead to improved outcomes both locally and globally. Led from University Hospital Limerick (UHL) by Professor. Ruth Clifford, this landmark study in chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine, reflecting its international importance. Fixed-Duration versus Continuous Treatment for Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia | New England Journal of Medicine Fixed-Duration versus Continuous Treatment for Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia | New England Journal of Medicine

Building on this success, the CLL18 trial has recently opened at UHL, with recruitment underway, ensuring continued access to innovative therapies and maintaining momentum in improving outcomes for patients with CLL. Together, these developments highlight the strength of the research ecosystem in this region, demonstrating how collaboration and patient involvement are advancing cancer care both locally and internationally.

LIMERICK CANCER TRIALS

Climate Health and Sustainability - Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC)

This year, the School of Medicine has made significant progress in advancing planetary health and sustainability education in response to recommendations from the Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC) 2025. The PHRC, founded in 2019, is a student-led international initiative that evaluates how health professional schools integrate planetary health and sustainability into education, research, community engagement and campus practices. Annual reports help institutions identify areas for improvement and monitor progress over time.

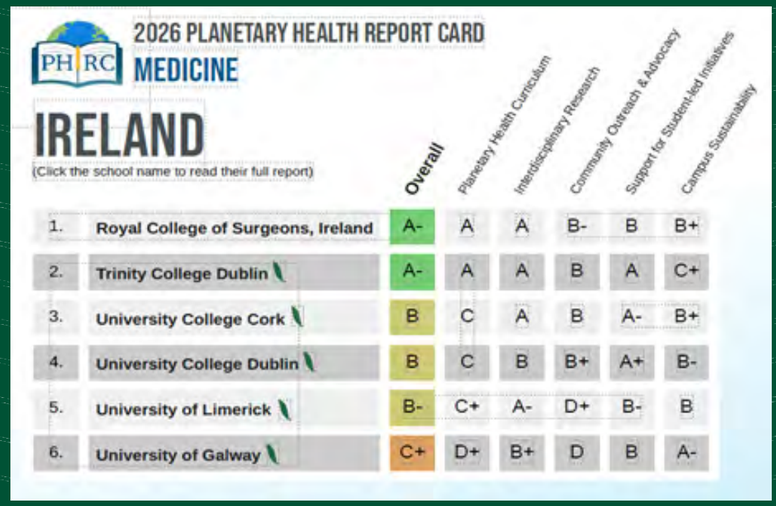
The school's strongest area of development this year has been within the curriculum, which carries the greatest weighting in the PHRC assessment. A new Climate Health and Sustainability Special Interest Group (Co-chairs Dr Enas Elsissy, Dr Vikram Niranjan) was established, bringing together educators from the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences (EHS) and students from the BMBS programme. Together, the group carried out a systematic overview of PBL cases and lectures, leading to the successful integration of planetary health and sustainability learning resources into the existing curriculum and lectures to be delivered this academic year.

Additional Achievements this Year

» Joining the European Network of Climate and Health Education to support further curriculum collaboration and development.
» Renewed progress in Green Labs Accreditation initiatives (Margaret Twomey).
» The discontinuation of single-use cups across the School in April 2026.
» The establishment of "Medical Students for the Environment" as a registered student society (Co-chairs Beata Friesen, Laura Jamieson).
» New collaborations with the UL Environmental Group.
» Delivery of climate change workshops through the Junior Achievement Ireland Programme.
» Student-led artwork and awareness initiatives promoting sustainability within the School community.

These developments reflect the growing commitment of both staff and students to embedding planetary health and sustainability within medical education and campus life and has resulted in an improvement in the overall school rating from a C to a B grade with marked improvement in curriculum and student support.

A notable achievement was Dr Enas Elsissy being invited as moderator on multiple sessions of Climate Medicine: A Clinical Training programme for Healthcare Educators, a global reach training educational course run by the Global Consortium on Climate Health Education (GCCHE and ENCHE) and Beata Friesen being invited on the student panel on the final session to share the experience learned here at the School of Medicine in integrating climate health and sustainability in the curriculum.





Preparing Ireland for the European Health Data Space - How the School of Medicine Is Building a National Research Infrastructure

The University of Limerick School of Medicine is emerging as a major national hub for open science and cancer data infrastructure through its leadership in ELIXIR-Ireland, EOSC-Ireland and National Cancer Data Node, developing EU and national preparedness for the European Health Data Space (EHDS).

The EHDS is a flagship EU statutory regulation that entered into force in March 2025, establishing a unified legal framework for the secure access, sharing and reuse of electronic health data across member states. It is a core component of the EU's broader digital and data strategy, aligned with initiatives such as the AI Continent Action Plan (2025), which aims to strengthen Europe's leadership in trusted artificial intelligence and data-driven innovation across sectors including health and life science.

EHDS is built on two pillars.

- Primary use focuses on improving patient care by enabling cross-border access to electronic health records, prescriptions, lab results and imaging. This supports sharing of healthcare data to provide continuity of health care of EU citizens who move or travel within the EU.
- Secondary use allows real world health data, collect during routine healthcare, to be reused, under strict safeguards, for research, public health monitoring, innovation, and regulatory decision-making.

In Ireland, EHDS primary use implementation is progressing through participation in EU programmes including MyHealth@MyHands and MyHealth@EU, supported by the Digital for Care Strategy, which underpins integrated care delivery and patient-facing digital health services. The Shared Care Record / Shared Care App is being rolled out to enable individuals to securely access key health information such as prescriptions and clinical summaries via a mobile application. To support this wider transformation, the HSE launched a major procurement for the One Health Record system in March 2026, Ireland's national Electronic Health Record (EHR), which will deliver a unified digital patient record across hospitals, primary care and community services.

Professor Aedin Culhane (Full Professor of Biomedical Sciences (Cancer Genomics)) and Professor Ruth Clifford (Professor of Haematology/Oncology), are leading national best practice in the adoption of the OMOP common data model through the all-island eHealth-Hub for Cancer, funded by the North–South Research Programme. The initiative is transforming and harmonising cancer data across multiple national hospital systems using OMOP to enable secure secondary data use and strengthen cancer research capability.

As part of this work, Professor Culhane presented an update on the eHealth-Hub for Cancer's progress in establishing a national node at the OHDSI Europe meeting in Rotterdam on the 18 April, highlighting Ireland's growing contribution to international standards for interoperable, federated health data analytics.

In parallel, Professor Aedin Culhane, as national lead of the EU Horizon-funded CANDLE (Cancer Data Node Developers) programme, is advancing Ireland's contribution to National Cancer Data Nodes which is widely seen as a real-world demonstrator of the EHDS. On the 18 March, she presented to the ELIXIR-UK Human Data Group and on the 7 May, she presented an update on national developments in a joint workshop organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) on integrating National Cancer Data Nodes into EHDS implementation. The workshop brought together almost 150 individuals from member states and experts to discuss governance, interoperability and national implementation pathways for cancer data nodes, highlighting how initiatives like CANDLE can support the European Cancer Mission and broader EHDS objectives of federated, cross-border cancer data use in research and clinical care.

The School of Medicine lead National Survey Finds National Life Science Data Infrastructure Study is Under Resourced

A new national survey led by ELIXIR Ireland in collaboration with VIBE (Virtual Institute of Bioinformatics and Evolution) has highlighted significant gaps and fragmentation in Ireland's life science data infrastructure, raising concerns about the country's ability to support modern, data-intensive biomedical research.

Commissioned by Research Ireland and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the Life Science Data Infrastructure Survey provides one of the most detailed national assessments to date of research computing, data stewardship and digital research capacity across Ireland's life sciences sector.



Key Recommendations Emerging from the Survey Include

- Development of interoperable national platforms for life science data.
- Investment in secure environments for sensitive health and genomic data.
- Expansion of bioinformatics and research software engineering capacity.
- Strengthening national training programmes in data management and stewardship.
- Closer alignment with European initiatives such as European Open Science Cloud.
- The report concludes that while Ireland has strong pockets of expertise in life sciences and biomedical research, the supporting digital infrastructure has not kept pace with the scale and complexity of modern research demands. Without sustained investment and improved coordination, the authors warn that Ireland risks falling behind in areas such as clinical trials, biotech innovation and participation in European data-driven research ecosystems.



At the same time, the survey provides a clear evidence base for future planning, offering a roadmap for building a more integrated and resilient national life science data infrastructure.

The School of Medicine Shape Ireland's Role in Europe's Open Science Future

Under the European AI Continent strategy, Europe is developing interoperable, federated data spaces to support research and innovation. The European Health Data Space (EHDS) is one of several emerging domain-specific data spaces. These data spaces will be interconnected with tools and services through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), a transversal research infrastructure layer that links European datasets, tools, compute and services to support research communities across all disciplines, not only health.

ELIXIR plays a central role in this ecosystem. Led in Ireland by Professor Aedin Culhane as Head of Node ELIXIR-Ireland, and her lab team led by Mr Gavin Lawler, ELIXIR-Ireland is partnering with EOSC-Ireland to advance Ireland's digital research infrastructure and open science ambitions. ELIXIR-Ireland connects Irish researchers to leading bioinformatics resources, computational tools, training programmes and data services across Europe, supporting sustainable life science research through FAIR data principles and collaborative infrastructure. UL leads Work Package 4 on EOSC Federation and contributes to Work Package 5 on sensitive data for research. EOSC is an EU initiative designed to create a shared digital environment for research across Europe, enabling scientific data and tools to be more easily accessed, shared and reused through a federated network of national and disciplinary systems.

UL's leadership in EOSC federation design places it at the centre of how these systems will connect across Europe, ensuring interoperability and shared governance. Its contribution to service development ensures EOSC delivers practical, usable tools for researchers.

A major focus of ELIXIR-Ireland is supporting genomics, health data, cancer research, and bioinformatics training, while also contributing to EOSC-Ireland; Ireland's engagement with the European Open Science Cloud. EOSC-Ireland aims to connect Irish research infrastructures with the wider EOSC Federation, enabling secure cross-border sharing, access and reuse of data, tools and services across disciplines.

Researchers in Limerick are also contributing significantly to Ireland's EOSC strategy. Professor Aedin Culhane and colleagues at UL are funded through national and EU funding contribute working with national partners Asiesa (HEANet), University of Galway (ICHECH0, DCU an others to the national roadmap, "Implementing the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) in Ireland", which proposes the development of an Irish EOSC Federation node linking national infrastructures with European open science services. The Limerick team leads Work Package 4 (EOSC Federation), benchmarking EU best practices through interviews with national EOSC nodes in Finland, Poland, the Netherlands and the UK. They are also contributing to Work Package 5 on sensitive data compute.

In addition, the team has been successfully funded through the EU Horizon Europe EOSC-Gravity programme to help establish a national EOSC node in Ireland. Together, these initiatives position Limerick as a key contributor to Ireland's growing role in European open science, digital health and federated research infrastructure, particularly in cancer and health data ecosystems.



Teddy Bear Hospital 2026



The annual Teddy Bear Hospital (TBH) was held on the 18 February, with 13 schools and approximately 900 children attending. Parents, students and volunteers alike were incredibly pleased with the event, with many of the volunteers eager to stay and help beyond their scheduled shifts.

This year the Teddy Bear Hospital had 13 stations all focusing on various aspects of healthcare, including but not limited to first aid, triage, surgery, pharmacy and many more. Over 230 medical students volunteered this year; volunteers were assigned to a station or in charge of leading a group of children through the circuits. Many of the students are already looking forward to returning to help next year.

In addition, the School of Medicine's Paramedic Programme brought their ambulance to the event. The ambulance station is one of the most popular stations amongst the students who receive a tour of the vehicle. Paramedic volunteers were also able to provide in depth explanations of the various equipment in the ambulance. Despite the rainy weather, the students remained positive and curious.



Anaesthesia Essay Competition

Picking Poppies: The Poppy Paradox

BMBS Year 4 student, Ivana Pyne was awarded the Anaesthetics Essay Prize of €400 at the 2026 Sylvester O'Halloran Perioperative Symposium for her essay entitled, "Picking Poppies: The Poppy Paradox," which explored the complexities of opioid stewardship in the Irish healthcare system against the backdrop of rising national opioid related deaths, now implicated in two thirds of drug related fatalities.

Her essay was grounded in original audit research conducted in a model 3 hospital assessing adherence to HSE guidelines for acute, postoperative and post procedural pain management. The audit identified several areas of concern, including frequent use of slow release opioids, inadequate documentation of stop dates, limited patient education and a striking predominance of tapentadol prescribing.

These findings directly informed local quality improvement initiatives, such as a new acute pain prescribing pathway, updated patient information leaflets and enhanced educational supports for Junior Doctors. By highlighting gaps between national policy and real world practice, this work contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen safe and effective opioid prescribing. She was delighted to receive this award for her essay in February and has further plans for re-audit and continued research.



Left to right: Professor Dominic Harmon (Consultant Pain Physician and Adjunct Clinical Professor) presenting the award to Ivana Pyne

To the Waters and the Wild Atlantic Way – Immersing Medical Students in Rural Life

By Dr Noreen Lineen-Curtis
GP Tutor and Northwest Hub Co Ordinator
for the ULEARN-GP Network)

The School of Medicine has always been progressive and is again leading the way with a new initiative to encourage medical students to look at rural General Practice in a deeper way.

Two years ago, a small group of three medical students gathered in Achill for a weekend of activities and a closer look at rural life. Last year, this had expanded to all twenty students based in the Northwest hub, and UL was kind enough to sponsor that weekend. The feedback was phenomenal and this year there was even more to celebrate. "We are delighted that we have secured funding from the Irish College of GPs to now make this an annual event where students from a number of different universities will have an immersive experience in rural General Practice," said Professor Liam Glynn (Chair of the Standing Committee for Rural General Practice and Head of Clinical Affairs, Full Professor of General Practice).

And so, fifty medical students from the universities of Galway, Limerick and Cork gathered in Achill on a Friday evening in March for a weekend of fun and education. After weeks of rain and wind, the clouds parted, the temperatures rose and the sun shone. Friday night brought team bonding over a fun table quiz in the local. On Saturday, the group was divided into two and after breakfast, half were wet suited and booted for surfing and half headed to Keem for a guided walk, including several stops to sit and revel in the peace and quiet of nature before arriving at the summit to stunning Atlantic views. After the descent, a little digging revealed several small amethysts and all were thrilled with their treasure.

Evening brought a group of tired but happy students back to the centre for dinner. Once replete, a fabulous musical treat was enjoyed by all as Mick (manager of Achill Outdoor) was joined by his daughter Blaithin and a few other musicians from Achill to entertain everyone with several lively tunes.

We then had a Q and A session between the students and the GPs. Each university had a representative GP currently working in General Practice, and we spoke openly about the diversity of opportunities available. From traditional General Practice and then from teaching to research, there are many different routes to a fulfilling career.

On Sunday, Tomás Brett (BMBS Year 4) and his team led a superb workshop on Emergency Care skills. Groups rotated across stations that included basic and advanced life support, managing haemorrhage and hypothermia, use of emergency analgesia, and a very interactive task which called on the students to match clinical presentations with causes and cures in a picture format.



The weekend ended with a sauna on the beach and thankfully the good weather held up until the last student departed.

Hugely positive feedback was received from 90% of the students. Comments such as, "we couldn't have been better looked after" and "the staff were very knowledgeable, passionate and helpful," reflect the professionalism of the Achill Outdoor staff. Others such as, "the emergency training was very practical and I felt more confident after it," and "thank you to all for an unforgettable and educational weekend," point to the value of the skills session.

I have no doubt that this weekend of fun and education has given many a student reason to consider rural General Practice as a career. Some of the first cohort of UL students to come to the Northwest have recently been accepted on GP Training schemes, and this to me is the proof that this kind of exposure works. It is a privilege to be part of this new venture and to engage with these wonderful students who will be looking after the rural populations in the years ahead.

Supporting Community-Led Health Through Cross-Border Collaboration: My Experience with IVY and the NPA SelfCare Project

By BMBS Year 3 student and NPA Selfcare IVY Volunteer, Keely Matsusaki

As a third-year medical student, I've always been interested in how healthcare can better serve rural communities. Growing up in rural Ontario, I can appreciate the challenges that can come with limited access to health services. While being in Ireland for Medical School, I have further shaped my interest in community-based and equitable healthcare. My interest in rural, community-based medicine pushed me to get involved with the NPA SelfCare Project and the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) Programme. The NPA SelfCare Project is a three-year project worth €1.2 million funded by the EU INTERREG Programme.

IVY is an initiative of the European Commission which allows young people to be incorporated into projects that promote solidarity and cross-border cooperation across Europe. Through my role as an IVY Project Partner, I've had the opportunity to contribute to the EU NPA SelfCare Project, which focuses on strengthening self-management of health and wellbeing in rural communities. Particularly serving areas where barriers, such as limited-service access and reduced healthcare capacity, can significantly impact patient outcomes.

My involvement in the Project has been specifically supporting the development of culturally appropriate self-care tools. One of my key contributions has been assisting with the synthesis and review of data for an ongoing scoping review examining self-care measures already implemented in health systems. Through this work, I helped identify health models already incorporating culturally appropriate self-care practices in their communities. This has helped to better inform the development of our Project's digital health tool.

A highlight of my experience was attending a co-creation workshop in Ballyvaughan, County Clare where members of the Ukrainian community and primary healthcare workers came together to share their perspectives on what they would like to see in a self-care support app. Listening to these discussions highlighted the importance of accessibility, usability and relevance in designing health interventions. Following the workshop, I supported the synthesis of these findings, helping to identify key priorities raised by participants.

Currently, I am involved in ongoing discussions on how best to incorporate this feedback into the app's development, ensuring that it reflects the real needs of the community it is designed to serve. The next phase of the project will focus on piloting the app with members of the Ukrainian community.

Through this experience, I've gained valuable insight into the importance of community engagement in healthcare innovation. I've seen how collaborative, cross-border initiatives like IVY can help translate community voices into practical, meaningful solutions. It's been incredibly rewarding to be part of a project that not only addresses healthcare challenges but does so in a way that is inclusive, culturally informed, and grounded in real-world needs.



Co-Creation workshop: UL School of Medicine Staff left to right standing: Dr Iryna Mamai (Research fellow NPA SelfCare Project), Professor Roisin Doogue (BMBS Course Director, Associate Professor B in General Practice), Professor Peter Hayes (Professor of Rural General Practice), Professor Liam Glynn (Head of Clinical Affairs, Full Professor of General Practice and Principal Investigator, EU NPA SelfCare project)



Keely Matsusaki

North American Irish Medical Student Association

On the 18 April, the first UL Medicine Research Conference was held at the new Student Centre. This event was organised by School of Medicine students as part of NIMSA (North American Irish Medical Student Association) in collaboration with the Psychiatry Interest Group. This Conference aimed to provide students with a valuable opportunity to present their research across multiple platforms (poster and oral presentations), gain experience for their CVs and network with like-minded medical students.

As a student-led initiative, we were grateful to invite experienced clinicians to serve as judges, which created both a professional and supportive environment for students to practice disseminating complicated scientific concepts to an audience of their peers. A sincere thank you to Dr Nóirín Lennox, Dr Helena McKeague, Dr Caroline Moloney-Murphy and Dr Oğulcan Yilmaz for generously providing their time and contributing to the success of the day.

The Conference featured three sessions. The poster session showcased a wide range of impressive submissions from the medical students, with judges circulating to engage with presenters and assess their work. This was followed by case presentations, where senior students presented interesting clinical cases encountered during their hospital placements, highlighting diagnostic challenges and real-world application of medical knowledge. Finally, the Three Minute Thesis session offered concise insights into student research and its broader implications.

We were extremely impressed by the standard of work presented across all sessions. Certificates were awarded to the top presenters in each category:

Poster Session: 1st Yajush Hingle, 2nd Omesh Jayaweera and 3rd Shahed Ghadban & Kenny Sin.

Case Presentations: 1st Sasha Russell and 2nd Omesh Jayaweera.

Three Minute Thesis: 1st Theresa Okwuegbuna and 2nd Kalin Krumov.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the BMBS Year 3 organising team: NIMSA Co-Presidents Jackie Trink and Sasha Russell, Research Coordinator Allison Lawlor, Secretary Julia Kochuk, Clinical Events Coordinator Sarah Kirkhope, Third Year Representative Kyla Krajcovic, Electives Coordinator Alex Rimke and Psychiatry Interest Group member Sreenija Pappur.

Overall, the Conference was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate student research and we greatly enjoyed learning from the breadth and quality of work presented. We look forward to building on this success and running the event again next year.



Left to right: Dr Helena McKeague, Dr Oğulcan Yilmaz, Dr Nóirín Lennox, Theresa Okwuegbuna, Kalin Krumov, Yajush Hingle, Omesh Jayaweera, Shahed Ghadban, Kenny Sin, Sasha Russell and Dr Caroline Moloney-Murphy



Left to right: Year 3 BMBS students, Sreenija Pappur, Kyla Krajcovic, Allison Lawlor, Sasha Russell, Jacqueline Trink and Julia Kochuk

SSM Project – A Happy Reunion



BMBS 2020 Graduate, Michelle Lepitre

Late in 2025, I walked through my front door after a day in clinic and stopped. There it was, propped up and waiting for me, "ORGANically Woven," the large, life-sized crocheted anatomical model I had built for my SSM Project during my time as student at the School of Medicine. My husband, Brad, had tracked it down and brought it home as a surprise. I hadn't seen the piece since living in Ireland and for a while, I simply stood and stared.

It was like running into a previous version of myself, the curious and sometimes over-ambitious medical student who had spent many (some might argue too many) hours, translating the architecture of the human body into yarn, stitch by stitch. The heart, lungs, all the organs of the female abdomen and pelvis, the layered structures, all rendered in colour-coded yarn, mounted on a wooden board and scaled to life. Back then, the project had been an undertaking that fused two things I loved, the precision of anatomy and the meditative craft of crochet. Now, years later and well into my career as a physician, the reunion carried a different weight.

After graduating in 2020, I completed my intern year at University Hospital Limerick (UHL) in 2021, then made the decision to return home to Canada. I entered Residency and completed my training in 2023, as a GP, ready to build the kind of Practice that reflected my broad interests. Today, I work as a General Practitioner with a focused Practice in Dermatology and as a surgical assist for a Plastic Surgeon. I also have a small roster of my own patients. Being a GP has really afforded myself the opportunity to have such a varied career, no two days are the same.

Beyond my clinical work, I regularly supervise medical students and Residents, serving as a mentor and teacher in much the same way my own mentors guided me. I hope they learn from me that medicine is enriched when Practitioners bring their full selves, creative passions included, into their work. It is important to make time for your hobbies and passions again, once you have been afforded a little more time after training. I believe that the best medicine is made with skill and imagination.

When my husband surprised me with my Project, he gave me more than a piece of my art. He gave me a mirror. In the stitches and the yarn, I could see the student I had been; ambitious, creative, a little audacious and I was able to measure that young woman against the Physician I am today.

Thank you to my husband, Brad, for working so hard to bring this piece home at last and thanks also to the Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC) office for keeping it so well taken care of while on display.

ORGANically Woven is home now, and so, in every sense that matters, so am I.

The All-Ireland Interprofessional Healthcare Challenge (AIPEC)

Students from the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences proudly represented University of Limerick at the All-Ireland Interprofessional Healthcare Challenge (AIPEC), hosted by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) on the 26 March.

AIPEC is a national intervarsity competition that brings together students from a wide range of healthcare disciplines to collaborate on complex patient care scenarios. Teams from six universities across the island participated in this year's event, highlighting the importance of teamwork and communication in modern healthcare practice.

The UL team selected through internal heats conducted at the school, delivered an outstanding multidisciplinary presentation focused on the management and discharge planning of a highly complex clinical case. Their presentation demonstrated excellent collaboration, professionalism, and a clear understanding of the value of interprofessional practice in delivering high-quality patient care.

Representing UL at the event were, Sorcha Curtin (Speech and Language Therapy), Margaret Baudino (Public Health), BMBS Year 3 students, Julia Kochuk and Anita Okonkwo, BMBS Year 2 student Joy Omoruyi, Jordan Mangan (Psychology) and Emily Scally (Psychology).

Participation in events such as AIPEC reflects the faculty's continued commitment to collaborative healthcare education and preparing students to work effectively within multidisciplinary teams. Congratulations to all students involved on this fantastic achievement.

Faculty mentors and committee members; Dr Enas Elsissy, Marie O'Donnell, Aileen Corrigan, Elayne Aherne, Dr Helena McKeague, Dr Sarah Harney, Dr Vikram Niranjan and BMBS Year 4 student Joseph Lancia.



Left to right: Dr Enas Elsissy, Jordan Mangan, Anita Okonkwo, Sorcha Curtin, Joy Omoruyi, Julia Kochuk, Emily Scally, Margaret Baudino and Marie ODonnell

62nd Annual Irish Neurological Association Meeting - The Hugh Staunton Prize

The 62nd annual Irish Neurological Association Meeting, under the presidency of Professor Norman Delanty, took place on the 14 – 15 May in Clontarf Castle, Dublin.

The Hugh Staunton Prize for best presentation by an Intern or Medical Student was awarded to BMBS students, Shahed Ghadban and Kenny Sin for their presentation, "Finding the Gaps: An Audit of Seizure Management in a Level 3 Hospital in the Midlands."



Professor Norman Delanty presented Dr Damien Ferguson, on behalf of his medical students, with the Dr Hugh Staunton prize for best medical student or intern presentation. The prize was awarded to Shahed Ghadban and Kenny Sin

MPH Practicum – Student Experience

The Practicum is the work-integrated learning module on the Master of Science in Public Health (MPH). Following the completion of the taught components of the MPH programme students have the opportunity to showcase these skills and practice real-world public health during the Practicum. The module is coordinated by Dr Niamh Cummins (Associate Professor B of Public Health) who has expanded the Practicum network this year to 36 partner organisations with our 46 MPH students undertaking diverse public health placements regionally, nationally and internationally. The MPH programme is immensely grateful to all of our partner organisations who provide meaningful and impactful learning experiences for our students during the Practicum. Here are some of their stories.

Understanding RSV Burden and Immunisation Impact in the MidWest Region

Student: Sreyas Manoj.

Partner Organisation: HSE Public Health MidWest.

Supervisors: Dr Margaret Morris and Dr Geraldine Casey.

During my Practicum placement, I had the opportunity to work on a project exploring the epidemiology and healthcare burden of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) in the MidWest region of Ireland. RSV remains one of the leading causes of lower respiratory infections and hospitalisation among infants and older adults, particularly in winter season. With the introduction of the RSV immunisation programme in Ireland in 2024 using Nirsevimab, the project focused on understanding the early real-world impact of this preventive strategy within the MidWest population.

Throughout the placement, I worked extensively with surveillance, hospital and immunisation datasets to analyse RSV trends over a ten-year period from 2016 to 2026. The project involved data extraction, validation, linkage and analysis to better understand RSV seasonality, hospitalisation burden, healthcare utilisation and immunisation outcomes among infants. One of the most interesting aspects of the project was observing how public health surveillance data can be translated into meaningful insights that support healthcare planning and evidence-based immunisation policy decisions.The analysis highlighted the significant burden RSV places on infants under one year of age and demonstrated how RSV transmission patterns changed before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.



Left to right: Dr Niamh Cummins (Associate Professor B of Public Health), MPH students, Nipin, , Aneeta Chacko, Tolulope Elizabeth Adebiyi, Mr Fintan Walsh (HSE Public Health Mid-West), Nitish Sharma (MPH Student) and Sreyas Manoj (MPH Student)

Early findings following the introduction of Nirsevimab, also suggested reductions in RSV associated hospitalisation among infants, supporting growing international evidence regarding the effectiveness of RSV immunisation strategies in reducing the disease burden and healthcare utilisation.

Beyond the research itself, the Practicum provided valuable exposure to real-world public health practice and strengthened my understanding of epidemiological analysis, healthcare data systems and multidisciplinary public health collaboration. It also provided insight into the practical challenges associated with working with real-world healthcare datasets and the importance of surveillance systems in informing public health action.

The placement was an extremely rewarding learning experience, both academically and professionally. It strengthened my interest in applied epidemiology and health systems research and reinforced the importance of translating data into actionable public health evidence.

MPH Practicum – Student Experience

Understanding Infectious Disease Patterns in Children in the MidWest

Student: Tolulope Elizabeth Adebiyi.

Partner Organisation: HSE Public Health MidWest.

Supervisors: Dr Marie Casey and Dr Margaret Morris-Downes.

During my Practicum with the HSE MidWest Public Health Department, I worked on a project exploring the burden of notifiable infectious diseases among children aged 0-17 years in the MidWest region. What initially seemed like a straightforward data analysis project quickly became an eye-opening experience into how much work goes into understanding disease patterns and translating data into meaningful public health information.

Using Power BI, I worked on developing visual dashboards to explore infectious disease trends from 2018–2025 across different age groups and disease categories. One of the most interesting aspects of the project was observing how disease patterns changed over time, including the impact COVID-19 had on infectious disease trends and seasonal variation. It became clear that patterns do exist within populations and that risk is not always equally distributed across age groups or communities.

Beyond learning technical skills in data analysis and visualisation, the Practicum highlighted the importance of accurate and well-structured data in supporting public health planning and decision-making. It highlighted how important it is to use data to understand disease patterns and inform timely, appropriate public health responses.

Alongside this work, I also contributed to aspects of a child health needs assessment project, which provided a broader understanding of how different areas of public health work together to improve child health outcomes within the community. Overall, the experience strengthened my appreciation for the role of data, collaboration and evidence-informed practice in public health.

Barriers to Uptake of Childhood Vaccinations

Student: Aneeta Chacko.

Partner Organisation: HSE Public Health MidWest.

Supervisors: Dr Geraldine Casey, Dr Breda Cosgrove, Dr Ken Beatty, Dr Margaret Morris Downes.

During my Practicum placement with HSE MidWest Public Health, I had the opportunity to work on an evidence-based project focused on improving childhood vaccination uptake in Limerick City through interventions targeting healthcare workers. The project explored the challenges influencing vaccination uptake, including vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, communication barriers and socioeconomic factors affecting communities within CHN 7 and 8.

As part of the placement, I conducted a comprehensive literature review using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, MEDLINE and CINAHL to identify effective strategies that support healthcare professionals in promoting childhood immunisation. The project examined interventions including communication training, motivational interviewing, reminder systems, audit and feedback approaches.

The Practicum also provided valuable exposure to the practical application of public health principles within the HSE. I gained experience in research methodology, evidence synthesis, stakeholder engagement and professional communication. In addition, completion of CIDR training enhanced my understanding of infectious disease surveillance and public health data systems in Ireland.

Overall, the placement was a rewarding learning experience that strengthened my interest in public health practice and highlighted the importance of evidence-informed approaches in improving population health outcomes.

Child Health Data and Research Mapping Project

Student: Nipin.

Partner Organisation: HSE Public Health MidWest.

Supervisors: Dr Maeve Bailey Whyte, Mr Fintan Walsh and Dr Marie Casey.

I recently completed a transformative eight-week Practicum placement with the Public Health Department, HSE MidWest. I had the privilege of working on the Child Health Data and Research Mapping Project, where my role was to describe the child demographics and healthcare utilisation patterns in the MidWest region.

A significant part of the process involved reviewing an existing Health Needs Assessment Report, allowing me to replicate and build upon an established Needs Assessment framework. The core of my work involved translating complex datasets into clear, visual insights. Utilising tools such as RStudio, Power BI and Qlikview dashboard, I developed visualisations to map health trends effectively.

This experience was much more than just a technical exercise. As an international student, I had the privilege of experiencing a warm, collaborative spirit of the Irish healthcare office. Working alongside multidisciplinary teams taught me the importance of clear communication and the “real-world” application of academic theories.

As I look toward my graduation, this Practicum stands as a highlight of my time in Limerick. It has solidified my passion for data-driven public health and provided me with the practical foundation and networking needed to contribute meaningfully to the field.

MPH Practicum – Student Experience

From Theory to Practice. My Practicum Experience at the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) Infectious Diseases Office in Rome, Italy

Student: Federica Bonetti.

Partner Organisation: Italian National Institute of Health (Istituto Superiore di Sanità; ISS).

Supervisors: Prof Anna Teresa Palamara and Dr Giorgia Napoletani.

My Practicum placement at the Infectious Diseases Office of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) has been both a professionally enriching and personally meaningful experience. As an Italian student completing a self-sourced placement, I was particularly motivated to engage with the national public health system from within; contributing, even in a supporting capacity, to work that directly impacts population health.

From the get-go, I was exposed to the dynamic, interdisciplinary nature of public health in practice. Attending the final meeting of the SeCOV+ Project in my first week provided an insightful introduction to cross-sector collaboration and integrated approaches to health threats. SeCOV+ is a European public health initiative focused on strengthening genomic surveillance systems for respiratory viruses such as SARS-CoV-2 and influenza, helping countries detect and monitor emerging variants and outbreaks more effectively. It was striking to see how closely these real-world applications aligned with the theoretical frameworks explored throughout my academic coursework.

As my placement progressed, I became involved in a variety of projects spanning infectious disease surveillance, epidemiological analysis and public health communication. My role has largely focused on knowledge translation and dissemination, supporting the process of making complex scientific findings accessible to broader, non-specialist audiences in a national effort to strengthen Italy's preparedness for infectious disease threats. These experiences have strengthened my ability to critically evaluate data and results, identify discrepancies and apply evidence-based reasoning in real-time contexts.

Equally valuable has been my exposure to public-facing health communication. Through involvement with the Telefono Verde AIDS helpline, I have gained insight into how sensitive health information is communicated effectively and empathetically to individuals seeking anonymous support. This experience has reinforced the importance of clarity, accuracy and trust in public health messaging.



Federica centre with her ISS colleagues

Throughout the placement, several core competencies have been central to my development. Attention to detail, adaptability in fast-paced environments and the ability to synthesise and translate information have all proven essential. Moreover, this experience has highlighted how technical research, communication strategies and public engagement are deeply interconnected within the broader public health landscape.

I can clearly see the progression and adaptation of my skills, not only in data analysis and communication, but also in my understanding of how public health systems operate in the real world, reinforcing my interest in working at the intersection of research, policy and communication.

This time at the ISS will surely be too short, but it has indeed underscored the importance of bridging the gap between science and society. It is through this connection that public health initiatives can truly achieve their intended impact.

Global Health and Sustainable Development (MSc PH) Workshop

The MSc Public Health (MSc PH) students recently completed the Module 5 workshop on Global Health and Sustainable Development, delivered in March by Dr Vikram Niranjan (Assistant Professor of Public Health). Conducted fully on campus this year, the workshop provided an engaging and immersive learning experience focused on contemporary global health challenges, evidence-based interventions, and sustainable solutions.

A key feature of the module was the introduction of design thinking in global health. Dr Niranjan, in collaboration with Sara Carroll (Waggle Learning), guided students through interactive brainstorming sessions, encouraging innovative, human-centred approaches to complex public health issues. Students explored a diverse range of global case studies, including air pollution, migrant health, vaccine hesitancy, childhood obesity and road traffic accidents worldwide.

Working in teams, students applied design thinking principles alongside WHO frameworks to develop practical, evidence-based and sustainable solutions. Adding a creative touch, teams were named after Avengers superheroes, symbolising how public health professionals harness knowledge as a "superpower" to address global challenges. The final presentations were of an exceptionally high standard, demonstrating strong critical thinking, analytical skills and global health competencies.

This module was very well supported by Ms. Roisin Kiely (Administrator, Public Health), Ms Karen Lyons (Postgraduate Programmes Officer), Kieran O'Mahony (Technical Officer) and Paul Mattis (Senior Technical Officer).



MSc Public Health students

Following the academic programme, students enjoyed a well-deserved and lively cultural experience at the Irish World Academy. An Irish dancinng session, led by Zoe Edmiston, offered students a unique opportunity to engage with Irish culture while promoting physical activity and wellbeing.

The session highlighted the importance of integrating movement and cultural experiences into public health perspectives on wellbeing. Students enthusiastically embraced the experience, learning new steps, sharing laughter and building connections in a relaxed and joyful environment. Such moments enrich the international student experience, fostering a sense of belonging that extends beyond the classroom.

MPH Practicum – Student Experience

Dr Sheila Boland Scholarship Award

Awardee: Margaret Baudino.

Partner Organisation: McMaster University
(National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools; NCCMT).

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Neil-Sztramko.



Margaret Baudino

This inaugural partnership with McMaster University in Canada for my Practicum placement was supported by the generous Dr Sheila Boland Scholarship in Public Health. I travelled to Hamilton, Ontario in March to work with the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT), one of six National Collaborating Centres funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

NCCMT, in partnership with McMaster's School of Nursing, supports the important work of enabling Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM) in public health by facilitating knowledge translation and mobilisation. I too, had to figure out what this meant. Essentially, NCCMT helps public health professionals access and use high-quality evidence to make the best decisions for population health.

NCCMT's office resides at McMaster Innovation Park (MIP), a facility housing many diverse organisations and companies. The environment at MIP is everything you would hope for in an innovation-centred workplace; three levels of rotating art from local artists, a building-wide bean bag tournament (also known as bags or cornhole) and a café serving house-made Portuguese egg tartes. Around the office, we focus on maintaining and curating resources, like the Health Evidence™ database that provides quality appraised reviews and meta-analyses for use by public health officials. The best part of being in-office, besides the interesting work, is Jack, a one-eyed rescue dog of unknown age and pedigree with separation anxiety and the sweetest face. He routinely outworks all of us and serves as a reminder to be our best selves.

Hamilton itself, part of the Golden Horseshoe, is a bustling city on Lake Ontario with cosy coffee shops, botanical gardens and art crawls every second Friday of the month. I was fortunate to be in Hamilton during cherry blossom season, something I did not know existed in Canada.

As I reflect on my time in Canada, I am extremely grateful for this experience. The all-female team I work with here is highly competent, productive, cross-trained and adaptive. I'm inspired watching their steadfast efforts to elevate and strengthen public health around Canada. Working with them has set a very high bar and has shown me the importance of finding people who share high standards while being collaborative, supportive and humble. I hope my contributions to several ongoing projects, like their Rapid Evidence Service, will facilitate informed public health decisions. I truly appreciate the time I have spent here and wish NCCMT continued success.

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland Inclusion Health Framework

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) has launched the Inclusion Health Framework, a new educational resource designed to help Doctors deliver safe, equitable and person-centred care to people experiencing social exclusion. Applicable across all specialities and stages of training, the framework translates Inclusion Health principles into practical guidance for everyday clinical practice. It focuses on understanding how factors such as homelessness, addiction, forced migration, trauma and discrimination impact health outcomes and engagement with healthcare. Structured around three core areas: interpersonal professional skills, clinical skills and specific clinical scenarios. The framework supports clinicians to build trust, communicate effectively and make socially informed clinical decisions that improve access, continuity and quality of care for marginalised populations. Dr Patrick O'Donnell (Associate Professor A of General Practice ((Community Clinical Clerkship Lead) and an Inclusion Health GP with HSE MidWest), was involved throughout the development of the framework as a Core Project Contributor. He was also invited to speak on practical applications of key communication skills in clinical settings at the launch.



Dr Patrick O'Donnell



Left to right: Professor Diarmuid O'Shea (President, RCPI), Dr Tara McGinty (Consultant in Infectious Diseases & Inclusion Health, Mater Hospital), Dr Niamh Allen (Consultant in Infectious Diseases and Inclusion Health, St James Hospital), Dr Patrick O'Donnell, Professor Cliona Ni Cheallaigh (Consultant in Infectious Diseases and Inclusion Health, St James Hospital & TCD), Anne Waithira Burke (AkiDwA Network of Migrant Women), Bernard West (Peer Support Lead in Inclusion Health, Mater Hospital) and Professor Edward McKone (Dean, Institute of Medicine, RCPI)

A Country Practice - Experiences and Innovations in Irish Rural General Practice

Students undertaking their Year 3 General Practice placements and who are passionate about Irish rural General Practice and eager to share their experiences, ideas and innovations are contributing to the evolving narrative of rural General Practice in Ireland with their insightful and reflective articles published in Forum, The Journal of the Irish College of General Practitioners. This academic year, articles published by Year 3 BMBS students include:



Nicole Eisen

Access to Termination of Pregnancy in Rural Ireland



Thakksha Jeyakularajah and Visale Balarajah

The Silent Backbone of the Village Rural General Practice and Trust-Based Care



Visale Balarajah and Thakksha Jeyakularajah

The Silent Backbone of the Village Rural General Practice and Trust-Based Care



Francesca Santos

A Long Road to Care Reflections from a GP Placement in Connemara

ULEARN-GP Tutor Conference



Dr Anna Beug (GP and Medical Educator, Dublin) presenting

ULEARN-GP Tutor Conference

The annual ULEARN-GP Tutor Conference was held on the 7 March in the School of Medicine. Our guest speaker was Dr Anna Beug. Anna, a GP Educator and Clinician, made an analogy of listening to patient stories in the "Making of Mosaics". Each story heard provides a small piece of the wider picture. With certain patients, with more complex lives, the full picture may never be available. Despite the incomplete picture, GPs can and do provide the most empathetic, holistic and high-value care that can be given to a patient, in that setting, and this does make a difference.

https://bjgplife.com/making-mosaics/.

We then had a plenary session, in conjunction with the ULEARN-GP Network Tutors, based upon the teaching and learning principles behind the 18 weeklong Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) in General Practice.

We specifically discussed the assessment of students and had a brief refresher of the many tips, tricks and teaching and learning techniques which underpin much of what happens during the LIC to help students achieve their goals.

https://experientiallearninginstitute.org/what-is-experiential-learning/

The General Practice Team shared their current research with the ULEAERN-GP Tutors:

Equity in Health, Professor Patrick O'Donnell (Associate Professor A of General Practice (Community Clinical Clerkship Lead); Multimorbidity in the Elderly, Professor Peter Hayes (Professor of Rural General Practice); General Practice Work Force, Professor Andrew O'Regan (Associate Professor A of General Practice); Capacity in General Practice, Professor Róisín Doogue (BMBS Course Director, Associate Professor B in General Practice); Healthcare and Refugee Populations Research, Dr Iryna Mamai (Research fellow NPA SelfCare Project).

All in all, this was a positive and energising day for all and it was wonderful to connect with each other as a team.

Paediatric Allergy Study Day

The School of Medicine, in conjunction with colleagues from University Hospital Limerick (UHL) and Cork University Hospital (CUH), hosted a Paediatric Allergy Study Day on the 10 April at the Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC), UHL. The event brought together students, community healthcare professionals and clinicians for an afternoon of focused and practical learning.

The study day opened with a welcome address from Professor Clodagh O'Gorman, who highlighted the importance of clinically relevant education in supporting future practice and improving patient care.

The programme featured a series of expert-led sessions.

- Meg O'Sullivan, PhD candidate (UCC) and clinical nurse specialist in paediatric allergy and immunology (CUH), delivered an interactive case-based discussion on allergy action plans and the practical use of adrenaline auto-injectors, emphasising safe and effective emergency management. She also highlighted the importance of clear communication with families and caregivers, ensuring confidence in recognising and responding to allergic reactions in community settings.
- Dr Miguel Garcia, Consultant Paediatrician and Paediatric Allergist at Cork University Hospital (CUH), provided an overview of the Oral Immunotherapy Programme at CUH, outlining patient selection criteria and the emerging benefits of this approach in allergy treatment.
- In the final session Dr Juan Trujillo, Consultant Paediatrician Paediatric Allergist
- CUH, explored the current challenges in paediatric allergy, with particular focus on ongoing research both in Ireland and internationally.

The Study Day concluded with a summary of key learning points, reinforcing the importance of evidence-based, patient-centred care in Paediatric allergy management. The event was attended both in person and online by over 65 participants, including Paediatricians, Paediatric trainees, General Practitioners, health and social care professionals and community medical Nurses and Doctors.



Dr Juan Trujillo (Consultant Paediatric Allergist, Cork University Hospital), Professor Clodagh O'Gorman (Foundation Chair and Full Professor of Paediatrics and Consultant General Paediatrician at UHL), Dr Miguel Garcia (Consultant Paediatrician and Paediatric Allergist, Cork University Hospital), Meg O'Sullivan (Clinical Nurse Specialist Paediatric Allergy and Immunology, Cork University Hospital) and Professor Siobhán Neville (Associate Professor A of Paediatrics and Consultant Paediatrician at UHL)

Overall, the event provided valuable insights into paediatric allergy and highlighted the importance of continued professional development in this rapidly evolving field. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our colleagues in CUH, the School of Medicine and UHL for their support in delivering this successful event.

Paediatric & Adolescent Mental Health Study Day

On the 28 April, health care professionals gathered at the Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC) Auditorium at University Hospital Limerick (UHL), for an engaging afternoon dedicated to Paediatric and adolescent mental health.

The event opened with a warm welcome from Dr Clodagh O'Gorman (Full Professor of Paediatrics), who outlined the objectives for the session and set the tone for a collaborative and informative programme.

The first session featured Dr Russell Viner (Professor at University College London Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health and Clinician at University College London Hospital), who delivered an insightful update on the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Study (MAPS) and explored the evolving role of Paediatricians in mental health care. His presentation highlighted key developments and the growing importance of integrated approaches.

Attention then turned to clinician wellbeing, with Dr Elizabeth Barrett (Consultant in Psychological Medicine, CHI Temple Street) and Professor at University College Dublin). leading a thought-provoking discussion on resilience and burnout in medicine. This session resonated strongly with attendees, emphasising the need for sustainable practices in healthcare.

The afternoon continued with contributions from Dr Kate Keenan (Senior Registrar in child and adolescent psychiatry, CHI Temple Street), and Mr Eamon Jones (UCD school of medicine, CHI Temple Street, who presented on national data collection efforts, followed by Dr Susan Giblin (SHO, University Hospital Limerick), who shared insights from local data collection initiatives at UHL.

The event concluded with a panel discussion involving all speakers, focusing on future directions for the network, key learning points and an interactive Q & A session. Overall, the study afternoon provided a valuable platform for knowledge sharing, reflection and discussion on advancing Paediatric mental health services both locally and nationally.

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BMBS Student Medal and Prize Winners



Congratulations to our newest 173 Graduates from the UL School of Medicine's Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery Class of 2026, on the occasion of graduating from their BMBS Programme.

Please Click Here to view the full conferring ceremony

First Prize for Overall Performance in the Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery Degree Programme
Beth Behan/Joseph Lancia (joint winners)

First Prize in Professional Competencies
Benjamin Blackman

First Prize in the Discipline of Medicine
Emma Ullrich

First Prize in the Discipline of Surgery
Joseph Lancia

First Prize in the Discipline of Paediatrics
Josey Legallais

First Prize in the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Josey Legallais

First Prize in the Discipline of Psychiatry
Connor Pires

First Prize in the Discipline of General Practice/Primary Care
Emma Ullrich



Left to right: Benjamin Blackman, Joseph Lancia, Emma Ullrich, Beth Behan, Connor Pires and Josey Legallais

Reuben Harvey Prize
Josey Legallais

The Reuben Harvey Prize is awarded in the Autumn after graduation by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland to the students in each of the Medical Schools in the Republic of Ireland who achieve the highest marks in their class for final year examinations in Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics.

Niall O'Higgins Medal
Josey Legallais

The UL Hospital Group is partnered academically with the University of Limerick and works closely with the School of Medicine to provide undergraduate and postgraduate education and training across several campuses and in several disciplines. The Niall O'Higgins Medal was established in Professor O'Higgins' honour and symbolises the increasing bonds between our UL Hospital Group and the University of Limerick. The prize is awarded for the best performance in the Medicine and Surgical final clinical exams.



Left to right: Professor Liam Glynn (Head of Clinical Affairs, Full Professor of General Practice), Professor Austin Stack (Full Professor of Medicine), Benjamin Blackman, Chwanrow Baban (Senior Lecturer in Surgery and Consultant General/Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon, UHL), Emma Ullrich, Joseph Lancia, Dr John McFarland (Senior Lecturer Psychiatry) Beth Behan, Dr Roisin Doogue (BMBS Course Director, Associate Professor B in General Practice), Professor James O'Hare (Module Lead Professional Competencies Year 3 & 4), Connor Pires. Josey Legallais, Professor Niall O'Higgins and Professor Kieran McDermott (Interim Director of Education and Full Professor of Anatomy)

Master of Science in Public Health (MSc PH) Graduation and Awards

Congratulations to our newest graduates from the School of Medicine's Master of Science in Public Health (MSc PH) Programme. Congratulations to all on their remarkable achievements and best wishes for their future endeavours.

Cole Peterson was presented with a Gold Medal for being Best Performing Student from this class of 2026.

Mary Ward Essay in Traffic Medicine Competition
Firts Prize Winner MSc Public Health Student Joyce Macharia

Congratulations to our current MSc Public Health student, Joyce Macharia on winning first prize in the Mary Ward Essay in Traffic Medicine (Postgraduate) competition 2026, hosted by the National Office for Traffic Medicine, an incredible achievement.

Joyce's essay on Educating Healthcare Professionals and the Public on Medical Fitness to Drive, examines Ireland's current paper based system for assessing medical fitness to drive (MFTD), which places an unsustainable burden on General Practitioners and relies on passive patient disclosure.

Drawing on international best practices, including Australia's dual platform public and professional guidelines and Ontario's mandatory physician education, the essay proposes a centralised, online digital ecosystem platform that provides accessible, condition specific guidance for clinicians and plain language education for the public. Key recommendations include: an accessible health literacy portal for the public, embedded decision support tools and virtual simulation for clinicians and a secure data link to the Road Safety Authority. Lastly, grounding it in health communication theory (the Extended Parallel Process Model), the essay advocates for high threat, high efficacy messaging over fear based approaches. It concludes that a proactive, digitally integrated system would transform MFTD from a clinical dilemma into a cornerstone of compassionate, collaborative road safety.

Dr Sheila Boland Scholarship Winner
MSc Public Health Student Margaret Baudino

Congratulations to MSc Public Health student Margaret Baudino on being named the 2026 recipient of the Dr Sheila Boland Scholarship in Public Health.

This scholarship supports the recipient to undertake their Practicum module with an international partner organisation and includes a funding award of €5,000 which covers travel and living costs during their placement.

Margaret travelled to Canada to work in McMaster University's Department of Public Health, under the supervision of Dr Sarah Neil-Sztramko at the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools(NCCMT).



MSc Public Health Student
Joyce Macharia



MSc Public Health Student
Margaret Baudino

Master of Science in Public Health (MSc PH) Graduation



Teaching Excellence Awards 2026

This year's Teaching Excellence Awards recipients selected by the School of Medicine students are Dr Áine NíRiain (BMBS Years 1 and 2) and Dr Mohamed Abdalla (BMBS Years 3 and 4). Congratulations to Áine and Mohamed.



Dr Áine NíRiain



Dr Mohamed Abdalla

BSc Biomedical Sciences Class of 2026 FYP Medal Winners

Congratulations to the BSc Biomedical Sciences Class of 2026 FYP medal winners. All the Biomedical students worked hard on their projects during the past year which was evident in the quality of their fantastic presentations.



The Gold Medal was awarded to Ayah Ismael for *Characterisation of DLL3, PD-L1 and c-Myc Expression in Patients with Small Cell Lung Cancer.* Supervised by Dr Amira Mahdi (Assistant Professor of Biomedical Sciences, Course Director BSc Biomedical Sciences) and Dr Thamir Mahgoub (Clinical Tutor in Medicine).



The Silver Medal was awarded to Amy Morrissey for *Investigating the Therapeutic Potential of Alisertib in Models of Hormone Receptor-Positive Breast Cancer*. Supervised by Dr Amira Mahdi.



The Bronze Medal was awarded to Jack Greaney for *Harnessing Three-Dimensional Model Systems for Melanoma Study and Therapy.* Supervised by Dr Evelyn Murphy (Associate Professor A of Medical Education (Assessment)).

Thank you to Waters Biosciences who sponsored the event, specifically John Carey (Associate Director R&D, Waters Biosciences) and Siobhán Cashman (Senior Staff Scientist, Waters Biosciences), who judged and presented the medals to the deserving winners.

Research January Conferring



Left to right: Supervisor, Professor Colum Dunne (Head of School) and Roy Philips PhD and Michel Lynch PhD with his Supervisor, Professor Aedin Culhane (Full Professor of Biomedical Sciences (Cancer Genomics)

Roy Philips PhD Thesis: Human milk and preventive neonatology: a reflection of breastfeeding in Ireland, and an analysis of human milk bioactivity and health benefits, with special reference to prematurity.

Michel Lynch PhD Thesis: Developing and benchmarking multimodal demultiplexing methods with application to Renal Cell Cancer.

Commemoration of the Fourth Anniversary of the Invasion of Ukraine at the University of Limerick

On the 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Estimates approach almost 2 million victims, including over 15,000 innocent civilians. Europe has not seen death on this scale since World War II.

It was our great honour to host Unissued Diplomas in the UL Glucksman Library. The opening ceremony on the 19 February was a very special event. The sun setting in the background through the windows of the Popular Reading Room felt symbolic as the ceremony began with a beautiful piece of music by violinist, Oleksandr Yukhymovych. The event was co-hosted by two of our UL students; one Ukrainian and one Irish, who epitomise the enduring friendship between our two nations. Nikita Tsymbaliuk is a Year 3 student of International Business in the Kemmy Business School and Eavan Brennan is a student on the MSc in Public Health in the School of Medicine.

The Vice President of Global and Community Engagement, Professor Colin Fitzpatrick gave a very impactful address. Professor Fitzpatrick also introduced our guest of honour at the opening ceremony, Her Excellency Larysa Gerasko, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Ireland. Ambassador Gerasko formally opened the exhibition after a meeting with President Shane Kilcommins in Plassey House earlier that afternoon. The event closed with a prayer by Fr. Roman Lahish and a wish for peace for the people of Ukraine soon. Unissued Diplomas will remain on display in the Glucksman Library until the 10 March and it is open to the public.

I strongly recommend that all of you visit this very special and important exhibition and to remember those students who never graduated, but who are eternally honoured.

We had the privilege of welcoming Yaryna Chornohuz, to the School of Medicine for a very special public event. "The Strength for Steel, Bullets, Bandages" featured poetry readings and reflections from Yaryna, who is a combat medic renowned for penning her verse from the frontlines. In a "fire-side chat" style interview, our wonderful colleague, Dr Iryna Mamai (Research Fellow in the School of Medicine and a Rural General Practitioner) candidate, discussed with Yaryna her experiences of the war and the human impact of caring on the frontline. The event concluded with a closing address by Professor Colum Dunne.

I'd like to warmly thank President Shane Kilcommins for his hospitality in Plassey House and Professor Colin Fitzpatrick who championed the exhibition; a special thank you also to Michelle Murnane in the VP Global Office for all her support; Dr Michael Hall (Munster Technological University, Tralee Campus), for extending us the invitation to host Unissued Diplomas in UL; the staff in the Glucksman Library including Ciara McCaffrey, Louise O'Shea, Kyle Christy,



Left to right: Niamh Cummins, Natalya Korniyenko, Yarynya Chornohuz, President Kilcommons, Her Excellency Larysa Gerasko (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Ireland), Professor Colin Fitzpatrick, Professor Colum Dunne and Olya Maryntseva

Maeve Shanahan-McCormack, Dónal Cosgrave and the Security Team. Sincere thanks to Donal O'Leary and all the staff in the UL Access Campus. Thanks also to Professor Colum Dunne for facilitating the hosting of the event in the School of Medicine and to Natalya Korniyenko for enabling us to welcome Yaryna. My appreciation also to colleagues, Lucie Pollard, Ian O'Donoghue, Karen Lyons, Maimoona Khalid, Margaret Toomey, Kieran O'Mahony, Emmeline Searson-Power and Helena McKeague. Thanks to Keith Wiseman for his beautiful photographs and to Siobhán and all in the Plaza Café and the team in the Pavilion for catering.

Last but certainly not least, a sincere thank you to the Curator of Unissued Diplomas, Olya Maryntseva whose organisational skills are surpassed only by her boundless enthusiasm and energy. To you and the families of the students of Unissued Diplomas, Míle Buíochas, Dyakuyu!

The Great SoM Bake-Off - Tuesdays Never Tasted So Sweet

Move over Mary Berry — our School of Medicine's very own baking maestros have been stealing the show! Every Tuesday this semester, faculty and postgraduate students whisked, folded and frosted their way into our hearts (and stomachs) with incredible cakes worthy of a bake-off tent. From perfectly piped cupcakes to show-stopping sponges, each creation left us in awe and a little sugar-high. A huge thanks to our talented bakers (Aedin Culhane, Ahmad Alkhan, Amira Mahdi, Deepanjali Vishwakarma, DoaaGlal Abozeid, Katie Cremin, Kelsi Gallati, Laura O'Halloran, Michael Lynch, Santosh Sharma, Tricia English), for making Tuesdays the sweetest day of the week. Who knew academia could taste this good?

With thanks, SoM colleagues who have sweet tooth!



Leadership in Climate Health - Representing UL at the ENCHE Forum



Drawing from work at the University of Limerick, Dr Vikram Niranjan shared insights on integrating climate-health concepts into teaching, what medical students are currently learning and future developments aimed at preparing clinicians for the health challenges of a changing climate. The lecture was attended by 20 different medical educators from across the EU.

A meaningful opportunity to contribute to this vital conversation and collaborate with colleagues across Europe driving climate health leadership forward.



Sweet Truth - A Health Literacy Event for Parents

Year 3 BMBS students, Stephanie Anderson, Visale Balarajah, and Hayley Hubbs under the supervision of Dr Vikram Niranjan (Assistant Professor of Public Health), joined hands with the Monaleen National School Parent Association to host an enlightening one-hour public seminar. The Sweet Truth focused on raising health literacy among parents about the harms of sugar in children's diets and the practical solutions to address them.

About 30 parents participated in this highly interactive session, where the future Doctors discussed how excessive sugar consumption impacts a child's heart health, cognition, school performance, risk of diabetes, dental health and how these effects can persist across a lifetime. Parents learned not just about the dangers, but also about what healthy sugar intake really means and how small changes can make a huge difference in their child's wellbeing.

This event showcased the power of social accountability in medical education, where medical students step beyond classrooms and hospitals to translate scientific knowledge into community learning. It demonstrated how medical students can contribute meaningfully to public education and play a key role in building health literacy among families.

The session highlighted that effective health promotion doesn't always need complex interventions. Sometimes, it begins with awareness, communication and community connection. A parent attending the event summed it up beautifully, "The future doctors were clear, confident and competent in sharing these insights. We'd love to see more such events!"

A heartfelt thank you to the Monaleen National School Parent Association and all the enthusiastic parents who participated in this event and made The Sweet Truth a memorable learning experience for everyone.

Following the success of the event, Dr. Vikram Niranjan was invited to contribute an article for RTE Brainstorm about sugar harms and prevention for children. https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2026/0331/1566109-sugar-energy-parents-children-habits-eating/





Scientific Outreach - Radio New Zealand - Investigating Indoor Health



Dr Vikram Niranjan (Assistant Professor in Public Health), was invited to Radio New Zealand to talk about House Burping article published in The Conversation on the 13 February.

He talked that "Most of us think of air pollution as something that happens outside, from traffic or industry. But we spend the vast majority of our time indoors and we're adding our own layers of pollution from cooking, heating, candles, cleaning sprays, damp and mould. I liked that "house burping" is funny enough to make people listen, but practical enough that they can try it that same evening. It's like a gateway concept into taking indoor air seriously." In a previous study my colleagues and I conducted (published in the Lancet), we found many diseases linked to indoor air pollution. Over time, these build up, especially in well-insulated homes that keep heat and pollution in. When the house is "burped", the sudden rush of outdoor air dilutes this mixture and pushes a good chunk of it outside.

A heartfelt thank you to the Monaleen National School Parent Association and all the enthusiastic parents who participated in this event and made The Sweet Truth a memorable learning experience for everyone.



https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/nights/audio/2019022962/house-burping-social-media-trend-or-healthy-habit



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