**Scientists Discover link Between Common Medications and Serious Falls in Older Men**

Using data from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), scientists from Trinity College Dublin, St James’s Hospital, Dublin, Ireland and three UK Universities have discovered a significant link between serious falls causing injury in older men and a particular group of commonly used anti-cholinergic medicines. The findings have been published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.

Previous studies have shown an impact on cognitive function and mortality from taking multiple anti-cholinergic medicines. In this important new study, the researchers examined whether the use of such medicines increased the risk of subsequent serious falls (which caused injury) in people aged over 65 years in Ireland.

Using the TILDA data which recorded the medications the participants were taking and the number and type of falls they had experienced, the team found that falls resulting in injury were more than twice as likely in men taking medicines with potent anti-cholinergic activity. The effect remained even after accounting for differences in health and other risk factors for falls. A greater use of such medicines increased the risk for these men further. There was no such association for women, however.

Senior author and Principal Investigator of TILDA Professor Rose Anne Kenny said: “Falls are one of the leading causes of loss of independence as people get older and the principal reason given for admission into nursing home care in Europe. If early risk factors are identified and modified, falls can be prevented. This paper highlights important new risk factors for falls.”

The Irish Gerontological Society's Annual General Meeting and Autumn Seminar 2015 will take place at 1.00pm at the Gibson Hotel, Dublin on Friday 4 September.  The AGM will be followed by a series of stimulating talks and workshops during the afternoon, and dinner in the evening. [Further details here.](http://www.irishgerontology.com/events/igs-autumn-seminar-2015)

**International Training Programme on Ageing**

*2015 Theme: Dementia and Memory Impairment*

The Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI), in association with the The Irish Network for Research in Dementia and Neurodegeneration (INRDND), The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Alzheimer's Society Northern Ireland, Alzheimer Society of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute of Aging will host a three day International Training Programme on Ageing on 22, 23, 24 September in Trinity College Dublin. It will focus on the theme of dementia.

More information on the[programme here](http://www.cardi.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/Int%20training%20ageing%20Background%20and%20Description%20Sept%20%282%29.pdf).

**Irish Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar announces National Cancer Strategy 2016-2025, with a Focus on Ageing and Cancer**

Minister for Health Leo Varadkar has set up a National Cancer Strategy Steering Group to advise the Department of Health on developing a new National Cancer Strategy for 2016-2025.

Minister Varadkar has also set up a Cancer Patient Forum to facilitate patient input to the development of a National Cancer Strategy for 2016-2025. Members of the public and other organisations will also be able to have their say on the new Cancer Strategy.

Minister Varadkar said: “Following the last two cancer strategies, the majority of people now survive cancer and survival rates continue to improve. The objective of the third strategy should be to bring Ireland in to the top tier of countries when it comes to cancer care. The number of people surviving cancer is likely to increase significantly in the years to come. However, **Ireland’s growing and ageing population** also means that cancer incidence is expected to double between now and 2040. We are only now seeing the full benefits from setting up the Centres of Excellence and still face many challenges.”

The announcement of the Steering Group coincides with the publication of a peer review analysis of the previous strategy, ‘A Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland’. The review was led by Professor Pádraig Warde of the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Toronto and is published today on the Department of Health’s website at <http://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/national-cancer-strategy-2006/>

**Important Milestone in the Treatment of Metastatic Prostate Cancer in Ireland**

Abiraterone acetate is now reimbursed on the high-tech drug scheme for men with metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (mCRPC) post-androgen deprivation therapy (ADT). According to the Irish National Clinical Guidelines, there is strong clinical data supporting the efficacy of abiraterone for men with castration resistant prostate cancer in whom chemotherapy is not yet clinically indicated.

**Irish-Led Study Awarded Prestigious International Fund to Examine Links Between Prostate Cancer and Obesity**

A new study led by researchers from Trinity College Dublin has just received a significant grant of 300,000 from the prestigious World Cancer Research Fund to investigate why obesity makes prostate cancer more aggressive and to see whether a simple exercise programme can improve quality of life and prolong survival for advanced prostate cancer patients.

A TCD School of Medicine research study involving 200 men with advanced prostate cancer from three European cities including Dublin has been designed, with some of the men taking part in an organised six-month exercise programme. Both obesity and prostate cancer are becoming a lot more common and the relationship between the two in an individual patient is becoming more important.

“We hope to show that a simple, low-cost exercise programme can improve quality of life and prolong life for advanced prostate cancer patients, and hopefully reduce the bad effects of being overweight on cancer outlook for these men,” said Dr Finn.

**Free Care For Over-70s to Start August 2015 in Ireland**

Minister for Health **Dr Leo Varadkar** and Minister for Primary Care Kathleen Lynch have announced the start of registration for the free General Practitioner (GP) care for the over-70s, which will commence on August 5th.

Minister Varadkar said the move was the next step to universal healthcare. “From August 5 all 400,000 people aged 70 and over will be able to see their GP without paying fees. It’s an important step because, for the first time, the eldest and youngest in our society will be able to access GP care without being charged.”

Minister Lynch added that as the Government continues to expand free GP care to those under 18 years of age, it will also provide more services in primary care. “We will focus on early intervention, providing services such as minor surgery and managing chronic illnesses such as diabetes and asthma in primary care. As the number of primary care teams and centres continue to increase, so too will the range of services being provided.”

A Health Service Executive (HSE) public information campaign on the new service is also starting, aimed at encouraging just under 40,000 people aged 70 years or older, who do not already have a medical card or GP-visit card, to register for this service.

**Health Service Executive (HSE), Ireland Announces Research Awards on Ageing 2015**

The HSE has announced details of research funding available, to promote and sustain the use of research and evidence to inform policy and practice in ageing.

The population in Ireland is increasing and people are living longer lives. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has indicated that those aged 65 years and over will increase to at least 850,000 by 2026. Our increasing life expectancy and thus our increasing ageing population is a success story for our population and health system. Maintaining and improving quality of life as we age and live longer is essential.

Multidisciplinary ageing research to date has primarily been dominated by the biomedical model of ageing internationally, including biogerontology such as biomedicine and genetics. Over the last number of years the Island of Ireland has gained recognition for its excellence in ageing research with academic institutions increasingly recognising it as a growing area of research. A number of leading longitudinal ageing studies have been established North and South. Research has been carried out in many areas including cognitive and physical deterioration, social participation and economic inequalities, cultural trends, work and retirement related issues. These developments are essential for evidence based research to better inform policies and programmes, allowing older people to live happier and fulfilled lives and to age with dignity.

On the part of the Irish Government, the publication of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS) in 2013, promotes a vision of active and healthy ageing underpinned by four Goals, one of which is to 'support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland'. In order to provide the best possible and most cost effective health service, it is essential that decision making within the Health and Service Executive (HSE) is based on high quality up to date evidence. As such, the HSE recognises the value of undertaking research, with research identified as a key component of the 'Healthy Ireland' policy framework document for improved health and wellbeing. The aim of these research awards is to promote and sustain the use of research and evidence to inform policy and practice in ageing.