



# EPINews

## Department of Epidemiology and Public Health Newsletter

December 2014

### WELCOME

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to this edition of EPINews. 2014 has been both an eventful and successful year for the [Department of Epidemiology and Public Health](#) as it has entered a new era in e-learning. In January, the Department launched an [Online Postgraduate Certificate in Health Protection](#) and in September, the [Online Masters in Public Health](#) (E-MPH). Furthermore, we are busy finalising our new Online MSc in Occupational Health and are looking forward to its commencement in early 2015.

2014 has also seen 8 of our outstanding PhD Students successfully defend their theses – Congratulations to Dr. Claire Buckley, Dr. Vera McCarthy, Dr. Maria Boyce, Dr. Margaret Curtin, Dr. Sinead O'Neill, Dr. Linda O'Keefe, Dr. Grace O' Malley and Dr. Sarah-Jo Sinnott. Finally, like every year, Department staff and students travelled across the globe sharing their research at various seminars and conferences – including those in Alaska and China! I would encourage you to circulate EPINews among your colleagues and direct any queries or comments to me at [emily.kelleher@ucc.ie](mailto:emily.kelleher@ucc.ie)

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas,  
Ms. Emily Kelleher

### DEPARTMENT NEWS

#### Department Staff Honoured at Awards Ceremony

In October, UCC honoured staff members for their outstanding contributions to University life at a ceremony in the Aula Maxima. The [Awards Ceremony](#) combined presentations and accolades to winners from three separate award schemes: Teaching & Learning; Staff Recognition; and Research. Our warm congratulations are offered to [Prof Ivan Perry](#) who received a Leadership Award for his exemplary leadership, strategic vision and ground-breaking contribution in the field of public health medicine, both nationally and internationally, and the development of the [Department of Epidemiology and Public Health](#) at UCC. Congratulations to [Dr. Ali Khashan](#), Senior Lecturer in Public Health, who was also honoured at the ceremony with an award for Research Supervisor of the Year.

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### CORE TEACHING PROGRAMMES

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## Department scales new heights in Alaska

Congratulations to [Mr. Sean Millar](#) who won a poster prize at the [20th IEA World Congress of Epidemiology Conference](#) 'Global Epidemiology in a Changing Environment: The Circumpolar Perspective' which took place in Anchorage, Alaska on August 16-21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Millar won the prize for his poster entitled 'Optimal Waist Circumference Measurement Site for Assessing Metabolic and type 2 Diabetes Risk in Middle-Aged Adults' which had been shortlisted out of over 300 entries as one to be judged for a student award.

## Cautious optimism as Irish childhood obesity rates plateau

Recently there has been some cause for optimism in terms of childhood overweight and obesity with research groups in some countries reporting a slowing down and possible decline in prevalence. Given that childhood obesity levels in Ireland are on par with those in other developed countries, researchers in the Department decided to explore if this decline/slowdown was also evident in Ireland over the past 10 years. Their systematic review, published in [BMC Public Health](#), found that although childhood obesity rates remain high in Ireland, there is evidence that they have stabilised and may be beginning to fall. While these findings give some ground for optimism, the current plateau is at an unacceptably high level. In a subsequent [guest blog](#), [Dr. Janas Harrington](#) and [Ms. Eimear Keane](#) tell us more about their findings.

## Success in China!

[Ms. Sarah-Jo Sinnott](#), UCC, recently won a poster prize at the [International Conference of Pharmacoepidemiology](#) in Taipei. Sarah-Jo's poster presented her research on the impact of two prescription charges on the General Medical Services scheme in Ireland on patients' adherence to medicines. The research found reductions in adherence to medicines, although the reductions in adherence to less-essential medicines were larger than those observed for essential medicines. The major exception to this trend was for anti-depressant medicines where large decreases in adherence were found.



Left to right: Prof Ivan Perry, Mr. Sean Millar and Prof Patricia Kearney, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health on the summit of Flattop Mountain in Anchorage, Alaska

## Department Achievements

Congratulations to [Dr Zubair Kabir](#), Senior Lecturer in Public Health, who has recently been elected a Fellow to the [American College of Chest Physicians](#) ("FCCP") at the Annual [CHEST](#) meeting 2014 in Austin, Texas. Becoming a FCCP demonstrates excellence in chest medicine, dedication to the work of the College, while also symbolising ones commitment as a leader at the forefront of clinical chest medicine.

Congratulations to [Dr Frances Shiely](#) who was successful in her application for the position of Senior Lecturer of Patient Focused Research in the [HRB Clinical Research Facility](#).

Well done to Mr Michael Hanrahan, who has been ranked third in the country in the [Henry Hutchinson Stewart medical scholarship](#) in Public Health. Michael has also been jointly awarded the [P.F. Fitzpatrick Prize](#) in Public Health based on his 3rd year medicine exams. He is currently undertaking an intercalated Masters in Public Health which is funded by the Association of Physicians of Great Britain and Ireland intercalated degree scholarship and will return to 4th year medicine next September.



Ms. Sarah-Jo Sinnott presenting her poster entitled 'Small copayments for prescription medicines: cents-ible policies?' at the International Conference of Pharmacoepidemiology in Taipei



## SSM 2014

The Department of Epidemiology & Public Health was well represented at this year's [Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society for Social Medicine](#), held in Keble College, University of Oxford. Congratulations to [Ms. Marsha Treacy](#) and [Ms. Eimear Keane](#), both Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, who were noted for their high scoring abstracts on the 'Prevalence of diabetes and related complications in a nationally representative sample of adults over 50 years in Ireland' and the 'Multilevel influences on overweight and obesity in 8-11 year old Irish children' respectively. [Dr. Carol Sinnott](#), [Department of General Practice](#), was awarded an Early Career Researcher prize for her high scoring abstract on: 'Resolving conflicts in the multimorbid consultation: How do GPs balance diseases, drugs and the views of other doctors?' Other delegates from UCC who presented their work included [Dr. Sarah Jo Sinnott](#), [Dr. Sheena McHugh](#), [Mr. Martin Davoren](#), [Mr. Sean Millar](#), Ms. Caragh Flannery, [Ms. Sarah Meeney](#), [Dr. Linda O Keeffe](#), [Dr. Paul Corcoran](#) and [Prof. Patricia Kearney](#).

The Society for Social Medicine aims to promote the development of scientific knowledge in social medicine, and covers a range of subjects including epidemiology, the medical and health needs of society, the provision and organization of health services and the prevention of disease.



From L-R: Dr. Carol Sinnott of the Department of General Practice, Ms. Marsha Treacy and Ms. Eimear Keane, both Department of Epidemiology and Public Health

## New Online MSc in Occupational Health

In addition to the face-to-face [Masters course in Occupational Health](#), currently running, a new integrated [Course in Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare \(NQF level 9\)](#) starts in January 2015. The format of this course is entirely online, runs part-time over 18 months and is offered by experienced academic experts and professionals from the community of H&S practitioners. The online MSc in Occupational Health is a course with an international multidisciplinary perspective of occupational health & safety incorporating public health, health promotion, occupational medicine & hygiene, psychology, law, risk assessment & management, training & development, ergonomics and epidemiology. The course is ideal for those who want to study in the comfort of their home with maximum flexibility of timing. Some modules are also available as CPD modules. For more information visit our [website](#) or contact information please contact Lynda Coughlan on [l.coughlan@ucc.ie](mailto:l.coughlan@ucc.ie)

## 2014 Jacqueline Horgan Bronze Medal Prize Meeting

Congratulations to [Dr. Carol Sinnott](#), UCC who won this prestigious national public health / health services research prize after presenting her research entitled 'More than the sum of single diseases: The association between multimorbidity and adverse childhood experiences' which explored multi-morbidity using data from [Mitchelstown cohort study](#). Well done to [Dr Sarah-Jo Sinnott](#), [Ms Celine Larkin](#) and [Dr Eve Griffin](#) who also represented UCC this year with their excellent work covering prescription co-payments, risk of future self-harm and aftercare for self-harm patients, respectively.

## Conference Presentations

[Ms. Maura Smiddy](#), Lecturer in Health Protection, presented her poster entitled 'Does observational hand hygiene auditing reduce the incidence of healthcare-associated infection? A retrospective interrupted time series analysis, 2009 – 2013' at the [Hospital Infection Society conference](#) held in Lyon in November.

[Dr. Sheena McHugh](#), Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, presented on 'Factors associated with place of death among older Irish adults: results from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing.' at the recent [Irish Gerontology Society meeting](#) in Galway.

[Ms. Eimear Keane](#) and [Dr. Sheena McHugh](#), both [Dept. of Epidemiology and Public Health](#), were awarded conference bursaries to travel to the [European Public Health Conference](#) in Glasgow in November. Both had oral presentations at a Young Researchers Forum, a pre-conference event organised by [The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region](#). Eimear presented findings from her PhD based on the [Cork Children's Lifestyle Study](#). Her talk was entitled 'Levels of physical activity and population attributable risk fractions: cross-sectional findings from Irish school children'. Sheena presented findings from the Mitchelstown Cohort Study on 'Cardiovascular Health and Concordance among Couples in a Primary Care Based Sample' which is due to be published in [Clinical Cardiology](#).

## PhD Scholar Graduations

Huge congratulations to [Dr. Margaret Curtin](#) & [Dr. Sinead O'Neill](#) on their recent graduation from University College Cork. Both were recipients of a four year scholarship on the prestigious Health Research Board Ireland PhD Scholars Programme in Health Services Research. Dr. Curtin's PhD entitled '*Can population-level variation in early childhood development be measured in a manner that supports service planning and intervention?*' looked at how we can effectively identify populations of children at greatest risk of developmental delay and how this information can be used to support prevention and early intervention services. Dr. O'Neill researched Caesarean section and the likelihood of subsequent stillbirth, miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy, where she collaborated with researchers from the National Centre for Register-based Research in Aarhus, Denmark to conduct the largest study to date including over 832,000 women.



## Preventing suicide: a global imperative

The first World Health Organisation (WHO) Report "[Preventing suicide: a global imperative](#)" was published in September. It aims to increase the awareness of the public health significance of suicide and suicide attempts and to make suicide prevention a high priority on the global public health agenda. The report covers a number of aspects of suicide including what is known about suicide across the world, groups at particular risk of suicide and what can be done at both societal and individual level to reduce the number of deaths from suicide. It highlights exemplars of best practice in different countries, including the [National Registry of Deliberate Self-Harm in Ireland](#) (NRDSH), which now operates under the aegis of the [National Suicide Research Foundation](#) and the [Department of Epidemiology and Public Health](#). The NRDSH in Ireland is a national system of population monitoring for occurrence of deliberate self-harm. The purpose of this national registry is to determine and monitor the incidence and repetition of self-harm presentations to hospital emergency departments with the aim of identifying high-incidence groups and areas, and informing services and practitioners concerned with the prevention of suicidal behaviour.

This WHO report will prove to be an invaluable resource for those working to prevent suicide and has a specific focus on informing stakeholders working in policy development and implementation and will present evidence for key interventions that show promise in reducing suicidal acts.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

[Trends and prevalence of overweight and obesity in primary school aged children in the Republic of Ireland from 2002-2012: a systematic review.](#) Keane E, Kearney PM, Perry IJ, Kelleher CC, Harrington JM. *BMC Public Health* 2014, 14(1):974.

[Developing recommendations to improve the quality of diabetes care in Ireland: a policy analysis.](#) Mc Hugh SM, Perry IJ, Bradley C, Brugha R. *Health research policy and systems / BioMed Central.* 2014;12(1):53.

[Body mass index and health service utilisation in the older population: results from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing.](#) Mc Hugh S, O'Neill C, Browne J, Kearney PM. *Age and Ageing.* 2014.

[Antibiotic prescribing in long term care facilities: a qualitative, multidisciplinary investigation.](#) Fleming A, Bradley C, Cullinan S, Byrne S. *BMJ Open* 2014; 4:e006442 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006442

[Resolving conflicts in the multimorbid consultation: how do general practitioners balance diseases, drugs and the views of other doctors?](#) Sinnott C, Mc Hugh S, Boyce M, Bradley C. *J Epi & Comm Hlth* 2014;68 (Suppl 1):A3.

[Predictors of general medical services scheme coverage during a changing economic landscape in Ireland.](#) Sinnott S, McHugh S, Whelton H, Woods N. *J Epi & Comm Hlth* 2014; 68 (Suppl 1):A65-A6.

[The prevalence of type 2 diabetes and related complications in a nationally representative sample of adults aged 50 and over in Ireland.](#) Tracey M, Mc Hugh S, Buckley C, Fitzgerald A, Kearney P. *J Epi & Comm Hlth* 2014;68(Suppl 1):A39.

[Late initiation of antenatal care in a large urban hospital: data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System.](#) Mc Hugh S, O'Keeffe L, Corcoran P, Greene R, Kearney P. *J Epi & Comm Hlth* 2014;68(Suppl 1):A11-A2.

Visit the department website for a full list of [publications](#)





Graduates of the BSc in Public Health and Health Promotion, Class of 2011

## The BSc Public Health & Health Promotion (PHHP) - 10 years on!

The first [BSc PHHP](#) students started in September 2004 and as of 2014, 191 have graduated. There have been a number of changes since Dr. Colin Thunhurst guided the programme's implementation and first faltering steps. There are still challenges. Developing an interdisciplinary undergraduate public health learning environment has required patience as well as creative integrative teaching delivery. Fostering close working relationships with colleagues across the university, and an understanding of 'what we are about', has been core to this process. One major challenge is 'positioning' our graduates when they leave us. Most undertake postgraduate study, many a [MPH](#), both in UCC and further afield. However, the range of other Masters studied is wide, from Nutrition, to Urban Planning to E-Business. This year two of our graduates were conferred with PhDs. What is clear is that there is something for everyone! Alumni have secured employment in research, health services, the private and voluntary sectors, in locations all over Ireland, in the UK

and further afield in for example, Australia and India. Going forward we are introducing more flexibility into the curriculum so students can pursue options to study online and abroad. A lot has been achieved but there is much more to do!

## Alcohol Consumption: Does the apple fall far from the tree?

Are you influencing your child's alcohol consumption? This is the question which two Transition Year students Ian O'Sullivan and Eimear Murphy from Colaiste Treasa, Kanturk hope to answer with their novel project. The aim of the study is to see if parents have an influence on their child's alcohol intake. For example is a teenager more likely to participate in hazardous drinking if their parents are hazardous drinkers? Does parent attitude towards teen alcohol consumption affect their child's drinking habits? Given our strong relationship with alcohol this has yet to be investigated in an Irish context.

The project has been accepted to the BT Young Scientist competition in January 2015 and the two students, with the help of their teacher Mr. Derry O'Donovan hope to eventually receive a publication in a medical journal for their work. The project involves surveying over 800 fifth and sixth year students and their parents

in 8 schools from the local electorate area.

The project is being undertaken in collaboration with [Mr. Martin Davoren](#) of the Department of Epidemiology & Public Health, University College Cork and Dr. Ann Hope of Trinity College Dublin. Dr. Hope believes that "this research will make a valuable contribution to increasing our understanding of the dynamics between teenagers and parents in how alcohol is viewed and used".

Hazardous alcohol consumption is a very real and common problem which can have a serious impact on the health of young people. This research will provide up to date evidence to aid public policy makers in tackling this important issue.

## XX World Congress on Safety and Health at Work 2014

Nearly 4000 participants from 143 countries took part in a [World Congress on Safety and Health at Work](#). Among delegates were [Dr Birgit Greiner](#), [Ms. Dervla Hogan](#) and [Ms. Sara Leitao](#). Birgit and Dervla had two posters entitled 'Manual handling training and behavioural

*change: Do they lead to a reduction of work-related MSDs? A Systematic Review*' and 'Work-related upper limb symptoms and the older worker', respectively. Ms. Leitao gave a presentation entitled '[Safety climate and occupational accidents and Injuries: differences among permanent and contingency workers](#)'.

## Welcome Caroline

Congratulations to [Ms. Caroline Hurley](#) who was awarded a prestigious PhD scholarship through [UCC's Strategic Research Fund \(SRF\)](#) in October 2014. Her PhD project titled 'Risk-adapted approaches to the management of academic clinical trials' aims to develop and evaluate a centralised risk-based monitoring plan for academic clinical trials in Ireland. Caroline will conduct her research project under the supervision of Professor Joe Eustace, Professor Patricia Kearney, Professor Mike Clarke, Dr Frances Shiely and Dr Evelyn Flanagan.

## Follow Us

Come join the conversation on Facebook and Twitter



## E-Learning

In September, the long anticipated [Online Masters in Public Health](#) was launched with 24 students; a cohort of students from all walks of professions with an interest in health promotion, health protection and public health in general. The group includes professionals from a range of backgrounds including medicine, dentistry and journalism as well four African scholarship students involved in palliative care, HIV & AIDS, nutritional support and reproductive health. With such an eclectic group of students, online discussion boards make for an interesting read. We have been very fortunate to have [Dr. Elizabeth Keane](#) join the E-Learning Team and she has overseen one of the modules on the Principles and Practice of Public Health. Her invaluable experience from the Irish Health Service Executive as Director of Public Health in Cork and Kerry has been invaluable to the discussions on this course. Feedback to date from students has been largely positive.



*Online MPH students and staff*

Ten students participated in the 6-month [Online Postgraduate Certificate in Health Protection](#) which began in January 2014. Eight students successfully completed the course and two students chose to go part-time. Four of the students who completed the certificate progressed to the Online Masters in Public Health in September 2014.

### MEET...

## Ms. Dervla Hogan

[Ms. Dervla Hogan](#) has been appointed as Department Manager in the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health for a 12 month period since 1st September 2014. Dervla is responsible for co-ordinating and supervising the operation of all administrative and support functions in the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health.

Since October 2010, Dervla has worked with in various research and research administration roles in University College Cork (UCC). Prior to joining UCC, Dervla worked as an Environmental Health and Safety Consultant with Chris Mee Safety Engineering (CMSE) in Cork for three years, initially as part of the in-house team and latterly as an associate trainer and consultant.

Dervla holds a Master's Degree in Occupational Health, Safety and Ergonomics from National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and a Bachelor's Degree in Physiology from UCC. Dervla is currently in the latter stages of completing her PhD Thesis in the area of Occupational Health focusing on work-related musculoskeletal disorders in employed and self-employed Chartered Physiotherapists and Physical Therapists.

**Did you know?** For many years, Dervla was very involved in acting and drama. She competed in a number of competitions including Scór na nÓg and she also holds a LAMDA Bronze Medal for acting. In secondary school, she was involved in many fundraising campaign's including raising funds for our sister school in Kenya.



*Ms. Dervla Hogan*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### December 2014

Life after PhD; the first steps to Career planning. 8<sup>th</sup> December, Brookfield Health Sciences Complex Room 1.01 UCC, Cork (**RSVP** to confirm your place [a.murphy@ucc.ie](mailto:a.murphy@ucc.ie))

Winter Scientific Meeting of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine, 10<sup>th</sup> December, Royal College of Physicians Ireland, Dublin, Ireland

UCC Digital Day, 12 December, Library Learning Zone, Q Floor, Boole Library, Cork, Ireland

### January 2015

Qualitative workshop for postgraduate students, A step by step workshop to guide your qualitative research study from planning stages to dissemination; with troubleshooting & expert panel discussion., 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 2-5pm, Brookfield Health Sciences Complex Room 1.21 UCC, Cork (**RSVP** to confirm your place [a.murphy@ucc.ie](mailto:a.murphy@ucc.ie))

### February 2015

14<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health, Healthy People – Healthy Environment, 11-15<sup>th</sup> February, Kolkata, India

Interpreting and Using Systematic Reviews Workshop, 17<sup>th</sup> February, London, UK

### March 2015

Satiety – from origins to applications, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, London

Statistics for Nutrition Research, 4<sup>th</sup> March, London, UK

ICOHS 2015: International Conference on Occupational Health and Safety, 9-10<sup>th</sup> May, Miami, US

Dietary Assessment Methods Workshop, 26<sup>th</sup> March, Venue and location to be confirmed

### April 2015

International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology (ISPE) 2015 Mid-Year Meeting, April 12-14<sup>th</sup>, Bordeaux, France

8<sup>th</sup> International DIP Symposium: Diabetes, Hypertension, Metabolic Syndrome & Pregnancy, 15-18<sup>th</sup> April, Berlin, Germany

IEA 7th Annual International Course, 27<sup>th</sup> April – 8<sup>th</sup> May, Nepal, India

### May 2015

Work, Stress & Health 2015; Sustainable Work, Sustainable Health, Sustainable Organizations, 6-9<sup>th</sup> May, Georgia, US

Conference of Applied Statisticians in Ireland (CASI), 11-13<sup>th</sup> May, Maryborough House Hotel and Spa, Cork

31<sup>st</sup> International Congress on Occupational Health, May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 5<sup>th</sup>, Seoul, Korea

### June 2015

14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (ISBNPA), Advancing Behaviour Change Science, 3-6<sup>th</sup> June, Edinburgh, Scotland

SCOPE School, The principles of combining treatment modalities, 9-10<sup>th</sup> June, London, UK

European Congress of Epidemiology 2015, Healthy Living, 25-27<sup>th</sup> June, Maastricht, The Netherlands

### August 2015

31st International Congress on Pharmacoepidemiology & Therapeutic Risk Management (ICPE), 22-26<sup>th</sup> August, Boston, Massachusetts

### September 2015

9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Diet and Activity Methods, 1-3<sup>rd</sup> September, Brisbane, Australia

UK Congress on Obesity (UKCO), 9-11<sup>th</sup> September, Glasgow, Scotland

### October 2015

EUPHA: 8<sup>th</sup> European Public Health Conference, 14-17<sup>th</sup> October, Milan, Italy

12<sup>th</sup> European Nutrition Conference, Nutrition and Health throughout the Lifecycle – Science for the European Consumer, 20-23<sup>rd</sup> October, Berlin, Germany

World Obesity Federation, Hot Topic Conference: Obesity and Pregnancy, 29-30<sup>th</sup> October, London, UK

### May 2016

International Congress on Obesity (ICO) 2016, 1-4<sup>th</sup> May, Vancouver, Canada

### Ongoing

Stata courses

Stata training

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