



Irish College of  
Ophthalmologists  
*Eye Doctors of Ireland*  
Protecting your Vision

# ICO NEWS

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WINTER 2021

## Message from the President



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the latest edition of the ICO newsletter. It is my pleasure as your new president to bring the following updates from our specialty to members and the wider eye health community.

As we near the end of 2021, it is difficult not to reflect on the prolonged experience and impact of COVID on all our lives, and the challenges faced by healthcare workers and patients. We will continue to stay focused on finding new ways to adapt and advocate for our patients' needs.

The ICO is looking forward to our Winter Meeting and Montgomery Lecture in The Alex Hotel on the 10 December. Dr Colm Henry, HSE Chief Clinical Officer is our guest speaker and the event will be followed by the Montgomery Lecture 2021, presented by Prof John Dart, Hon. Consultant Ophthalmologist, Hon. Professor, University College London, Moorfields Eye Hospital, London.

The continuation of the educational series for the integrated eye care team will take place with a virtual meeting on the 2 December. Clinical Lead Billy Power will chair the session, and delegates will hear from the Consultant team in Cork on the latest developments and progress for Cork/Kerry ophthalmology services.

I hope you enjoy reading this latest edition and wish you all continued health and wellbeing.

Best wishes,  
Tim Fulcher

## ICO Annual Report 2020

The ICO officially launched our first Annual Report at a virtual meeting for members, held on Friday, 24 September.

The report provides an update on ICO activities and finances for 2020, in line with the College's responsibilities under the Charities Governance Code and the requirements of the Charities Regulator.

The ICO's commitment to compliance with the requirements of the Charities Regulator with clear governance structures, policies and procedures was a considerable focus and body of work for the College in 2020.

A video recording of the launch, presented by Dr. Patricia Quinlan, was circulated to our members and is also available to view on the member's portal and [www.eyedoctors.ie](http://www.eyedoctors.ie). A hard copy of the annual report has been posted to our members.

### ICO AGM

The ICO AGM took place the following morning, Saturday, 25 September. ICO members can access the ICO committee reports, AGM presentations, slides and minutes on the member's portal.

On behalf of the College and the Board, outgoing President Patricia Quinlan expressed thanks to the Board members whose terms have been completed for their contribution, particularly over the past 18 months for the work on the new ICO Constitution and the Governance Code. She thanked in turn; Mark Cahill, Maureen Hillery, Alison Blake, Grace O Malley, Pat Logan, Garry Treacy and Barry Quill.



The ICO is delighted to welcome newly elected Board members Sean Chen, Eamonn O'Connell and Aziz Rehman as they commence their three year term and congratulate John Doris who has been appointed President Elect. Ms Brona Kavanagh, the College Accountant, will take on the role of Company Secretary.

### Mr Tim Fulcher, ICO President

The chain of office was passed over by Patricia Quinlan to Tim Fulcher, who wished Tim every success in his endeavours as he commences his two-year term as ICO President.

The ICO Board sincerely thanks Patricia for her tireless and unwaveringly skilled stewardship of the College during her term as President over the past two years. It has been the most challenging of times throughout the pandemic and Patricia's expert guidance and leadership is to be commended. We look forward to Patricia's continued influence through her membership of the Board.

# Annual Mooney Lecture

Pictured: Dr. Susan Bressler  
and Dr. Neil Bressler

Following the postponement of the prestigious Annual Mooney Lecture at the ICO Annual Conference in 2020 and 2021, it was a great honour and pleasure for the College to welcome retinal specialists, Dr. Neil Bressler and Dr. Susan Bressler, to co-present the 2021 lecture virtually on the evening of Friday, 24 September.



World figures in medical retina, Prof. Neil and Susan Bressler have pioneered research and clinical trials in retinal diseases, in particular neo-vascular AMD, diabetic retinopathy and vascular occlusive disease. In her introduction, Patricia Quinlan credited their clear understanding and high quality clinical research to have done much to bring practitioners to where they are today, in a position to treat and prevent irreversible sight loss for many sight threatening conditions

previously considered untreatable.

The topic for their joint lecture was on 'Recent Clinically Relevant Outcomes from the DRCR Retina Network.'

Dr. Neil Bressler, Chief of the Retina Division at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, discussed this topic in relation to 'Advances in Managing Diabetic Macular Edema.'

Dr. Susan Bressler, the Julia G. Levy, PhD, Professor of Ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute, followed with a comprehensive presentation

on 'Alternative Therapies for Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy'.

ICO members and retinal specialists Marie Hickey-Dwyer, Mark Cahill and John Doris participated in a lively Q&A session to further explore the data and information covered in the outstanding lectures. The formal 'virtual' presentation of the Mooney Lecture medals to Prof Neil and Susan Bressler and an expression of our warmest regards and thanks to our guest lecturers brought the session to a close.

## ICO Winter Meeting & Annual Montgomery Lecture 2021

The ICO's first return to in-person member meetings will take place on Friday, 10 December at our annual winter gathering in The Alex Hotel, Dublin.



Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE

The College is delighted to welcome Dr. Colm Henry, HSE Chief Clinical Officer, as our guest speaker.

The focus of this year's session is also on providing an opportunity to trainees, NCHDs and all doctors to present on their work. The call for papers is out with our members and trainees, with details for submission of abstracts available on our portal and on the ICO website. Please note the closing date for submission is Monday, 29 November.

The Annual Montgomery Lecture 2021 will take place in the same venue that evening from 6-7pm. We are honoured to invite Prof John Dart, Honorary Consultant Ophthalmologist and Hon. Professor at University College



Prof John KG Dart,  
MA DM FRCOphth  
Hon. Consultant  
Ophthalmologist,  
Hon. Professor,  
University College  
London, Moorfields  
Eye Hospital, London

London and Moorfields Eye Hospital, London to present this year's lecture entitled "Acanthamoeba Keratitis: a one career disease".

Registration and meeting details have been circulated to our members and we very much look forward to seeing members. We ask members to ensure they have their COVID cert with them and ask members to wear their face masks while in the meeting venue

# Animated video promoting Medical Ophthalmology training programme

The ICO recently launched our new 'animated explainer' video which aims to increase awareness of the standalone National Training Programme in Medical Ophthalmology and attract highly suited graduates to a career in the specialty.

The ICO and the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology have worked extensively with the HSE and Department of Health in recent years to ensure the expansion of the delivery of specialist ophthalmic care to patients outside of the traditional acute setting, through an integrated model of care between the acute hospitals and community setting.

This follows the strategic training and workforce planning decision by the ICO in 2018 to launch a standalone National Training Programme in Medical Ophthalmology.

The purpose of the Medical Ophthalmology programme is to better align our ophthalmology workforce with the areas of greatest patient demand now and in the future, namely medical retina, glaucoma and paediatrics.

In the lead up to this year's NTP application process opening date, the College undertook a comprehensive

and targeted communications strategy to engage with our target audience and key stakeholders. The animated video was circulated to the schools of medicine at each university, intern networks, all relevant stakeholders and disseminated via our social media channel on Twitter

throughout the autumn/winter.

The engagement is ongoing and plans to develop future communication videos are in motion. The College would like to thank the Professors of Ophthalmology at the universities and their team of ophthalmology tutors and lecturers for their help and support in ensuring the communications reached their student audience.

Members can watch our new video via [eyedoctors.ie](http://eyedoctors.ie) or via our Twitter account @eyedoctors.ie



## Pan-Ireland Ophthalmic Conference 2021, Belfast

In his capacity as President of the ICO, Tim Fulcher was welcomed as a guest speaker at this year's Pan-Ireland Ophthalmology Day (POD), hosted in Queen's University Belfast on Friday 15 October.

The online event celebrated White Cane Safety Day, with invited guest speakers Professor Bernie Chang, President of Royal College of Ophthalmologists and Professor Gianni Virgili, Professor and Editor of Cochrane Eyes and Vision and Evidence

Synthesis Ireland, joining the ICO President to speak at the event.

The event is an important date in the ophthalmology calendar each year as a supportive and unified sharing of knowledge among the specialty north and south, aiming to deliver updates on the progress and

of challenges experienced across ophthalmology services in Ireland.

The timing of the event coincided with that of World Sight Day (Thursday, 14th October) and a patient engagement day on Saturday 16 October.

The ICO would also like to sincerely thank Dr Mairide McGuire, who acted as a spokesperson for the ICO in the excellent segment on eye health awareness which aired on Today with Claire Byrne, RTE Radio 1 during the week of World Sight Day.

# Adare Retinal Meeting 2021



Pictured at the 12th annual Adare Retinal Meeting, which took place on Thursday, 21 October at The Dunraven Arms Hotel, Co Limerick are (l-r) Dr Alan Hopkins, Mr Pathma Ramasamy, meeting coordinator and chair, Miss Marie Hickey Dwyer, Dr Triona Butler, Mr Dara Kilmartin, Dr Deirdre Townley and Mr Anthony Cullinane



Dr Jarlath Gallagher, Mr Eamon O'Donoghue & Dr Michele Coffey



Dr Alison Blake, Dr Mohamed Hosny, Miss Marie Hickey Dwyer, Dr Catherine McCrann and Dr Mark James



Mr Behooz Golchin and Dr Mark James



Dr Ann McCarthy, Dr Geraldine Comer, Dr Grace O'Malley

# Adare Retinal Meeting

Marie Hickey Dwyer, meeting organiser gives an overview of day:

On a lovely sunny autumn day, we gathered together for the first time since the outbreak of Covid-19 in Adare for our annual meeting which had not been held in 2020. It was wonderful to see and meet so many colleagues who had not been together for such a long time. It was especially invigorating to meet so many new young ophthalmologists.

We had an excellent programme addressing future treatment for retinal disease in the form of Anti-VEGF therapy for dry age related macular degeneration. Faricimab delivered by myself. Professor Dara Kilmartin and Dr Maedbh Rhatigan made presentations about Uveitis and their experience of Beovu.

We had a session on Diabetic Retinopathy delivered by Mr Anthony Cullinane and Mr Pathma Ramasamy. Dr Deirdre Townley discussed sympathetic ophthalmia in detail.

Dr Triona Butler gave a presentation on OCT and Dr Alan Hopkins a case presentation regarding management of a patient with vitreous haemorrhage.

We had a most enlightening special guest lecture delivered by Dr Eoin Noctor Consultant Endocrinologist in University Hospital Limerick.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the ophthalmologists who attended the meeting for their enthusiastic engagement in the meeting and for their wonderful cooperation and responsibility regarding Covid etiquette. I am delighted to say the meeting concluded on a high note. I look forward to seeing you all next year.

# AMD Awareness Week 2021

Now in its fourteenth year, the ICO has supported the AMD Awareness Week campaign alongside vision stakeholders with the overall aim of promoting greater public awareness of AMD, the symptoms to be aware of and the lifestyle choices which help to protect vision.



Pictured at the launch of AMD Awareness Week 2021 (20-26th September) is former RTÉ news reader Anne Doyle, ambassador for the 2021 campaign with Mr Mark Cahill and Siobhan Kelly in Herbert Park, Ballsbridge.

New research from Red C, commissioned by Novartis for AMD Awareness Week, shows that:

- Only 35% of the public are aware that AMD is the leading cause of sight loss in Ireland for those aged over 50.
- Almost half of the public (49%) have never heard of wet AMD.

The new research shows low awareness of the main symptoms of wet AMD:

- 41% reported any awareness of "distorted and/or blurry vision"
- 37% reported any awareness of "An empty or dark area in the middle of vision"
- 14% reported any awareness of "Perceiving a waviness to

straight lines"

- 11% reported any awareness of "Objects that appear to be the wrong size or shape"
- 47% reported any awareness of "Visual difficulty with everyday activities, like reading, watching TV or driving"
- 9% reported any awareness of "Incorrect perception of colours"

AMD information resources for the public are available on the ICO website [www.eyedoctors.ie](http://www.eyedoctors.ie) and at [www.amd.ie](http://www.amd.ie) which was relaunched with new content for this year's campaign to help increase awareness of the symptoms of AMD and provide helpful resources.

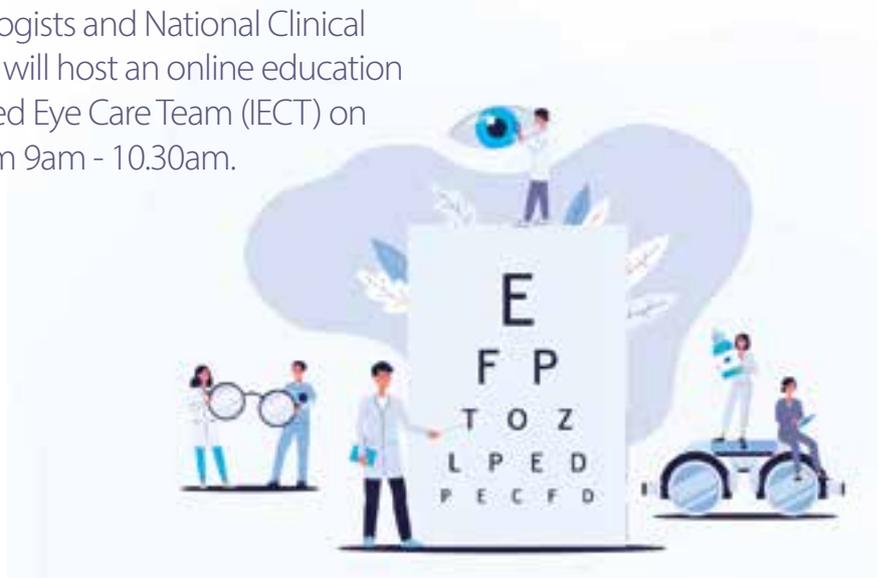
# ICO and Clinical Programme Integrated Eye Care Team Meeting

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists and National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology will host an online education webinar session for the Integrated Eye Care Team (IECT) on Thursday, 2 December 2021 from 9am - 10.30am.

The discussion will focus on the progress of the roadmap for the development of regional ophthalmic services in Cork/Kerry to integrate hospital and community service and the plans for the future.

Prof. William Power, Clinical Lead for Ophthalmology will chair the session, and delegates will hear presentations on developments in the region from Consultant Ophthalmologists Dr Mark James, Mr Daniel Coakley and Mr Eamonn O'Connell.

This will include an overview of the rationale and process for the transfer of services from Cork University Hospital to the South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital and the need for a new cataract theatre, the links established between the community and the hospital, and the funding for new consultant posts.



The ongoing and evolving plans for the transition to community services including the new primary care centre in Ballincollig and how the new services will impact access to eye care services for patients locally will be discussed during the live webinar. This will include an update on the delivery of medical retina and glaucoma services through

new patient pathways and the key importance of electronic medical records.

We look forward to updating ICO members, CHO managers and members of the extended eye care team on these important developments at the session.

**Registration details have been circulated to our members via the portal.**

## ESCRS Board Election

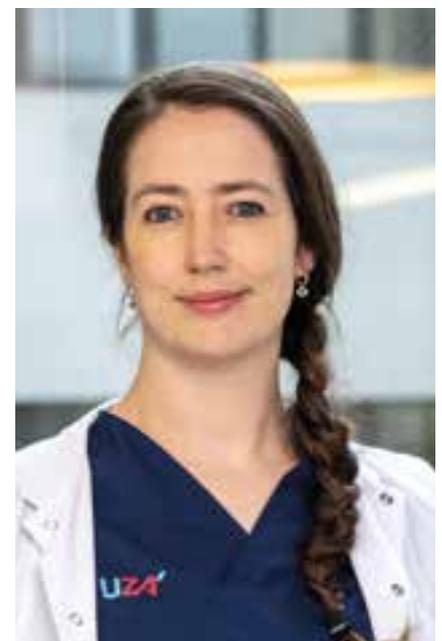
Our congratulations to ICO member, Prof Sorcha Ní Dhubhghaill on her recent successful election to the Board of the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons.

Sorcha follows in the footsteps of the many influential Irish figures in ophthalmology on an international level. Remembering our late revered colleague Prof Peter Barry, co-founder and Past President of the ESCRS and a Board member for over 25 years.

Speaking of her ambitions in the

role, Sorcha said she will be working along with fellow members of the board to continue the good work that has made the ESCRS the powerhouse it is today, and prepare it for the challenges ahead.

Congratulations to Sorcha on this wonderful opportunity and we wish her every success in the role.



Contributory Article

# New European registry on retinopathy of prematurity established

Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) is one of the leading causes for childhood blindness worldwide.

We are fortunate that ROP requiring treatment is relatively rare in Europe and that we already have some national initiatives collecting ROP data on a country-level (SWEDROP, Retina.net ROP registry and others) that are aimed at further improving ROP care and outcomes. While the findings from these initiatives may be representative for the treatment patterns and outcomes in the respective countries, ROP patterns and disease progression vary in European

collected, limiting the time commitment for data entry at participating centers. All data is pseudonymized, no patient identifying information is shared.

All centers located in geographical Europe and treating infants with ROP can participate. Before entering data, each center needs to obtain approval from its local Ethics Committee. The EU-ROP study management team will provide the study protocol and can assist with the local Ethics submission process.



## What are the EU-ROP registry's aims?

The primary objectives of EU-ROP are to collect data on ROP characteristics, treatment patterns, follow-ups and outcomes in different countries in geographical Europe irrespective of the treatment modality. An important secondary objective is to analyze the

incidence of ROP requiring treatment. The EU-ROP project will provide valuable data that can help improving ROP care across Europe.

countries. In order to obtain real-life data that is representative beyond one single country, it is therefore important to collect data on treated ROP on a multinational level. This is why we have launched the EU-ROP registry project (Clinicaltrials.gov identifier: NCT04939571).

## What is the EU-ROP registry?

The EU-ROP registry is an international, multicenter, observational registry study intended to run open-ended to collect and analyze data on infants treated for retinopathy of prematurity irrespective of the treatment modality. The registry is strictly observational; only clinical routine data is collected, no study-specific examinations or interventions are to be performed. Only data from treated ROP infants is

collected, limiting the time commitment for data entry at participating centers. All data is pseudonymized, no patient identifying information is shared.

## How is the project financed?

The EU-ROP project is currently financed by extramural grants from the University Medicine Greifswald, solicited through the EU-ROP principal investigator from Novartis Pharma AG and Bayer. Companies supporting the registry do not have any influence on content or design of the registry.

## Where do I find more information on the EU-ROP registry?

If you want to learn more about EU-ROP, please visit our project website: [www.eu-rop.org](http://www.eu-rop.org) or contact us via: [contact@eu-rop.org](mailto:contact@eu-rop.org)

## CHO9 IECT Awarded 'Innovation in Service Delivery' at Health Service (HSE) Excellence Awards



At the 2020 virtual meeting for the Integrated Eye Care Team (IECT), Dr Duncan Rogers, Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist and Clinical Lead for the team at CHO9, outlined the Paediatric Ophthalmology Waiting List Initiative, and the excellent results achieved.

The ICO wishes to congratulate Duncan, Dr Aziz Rehman and the team at CHO9 on receiving the overall award for 'Innovation in Service Delivery' at the Health Service (HSE) Excellence Awards.

A wonderful achievement and recognition of the excellent work underway through the integrated model of eye care.

## Contributory Article

# Fighting Blindness' Retina 2021 showcased the latest in gene therapy research for ophthalmology

Fighting Blindness held their 22nd annual Retina conference on 5/6 November, as a virtual event for the second year. The scientific day (Nov 5) brought together leading clinicians and scientists at the vanguard of ophthalmology research to share their insights.

This year the aim was to showcase the latest research in gene therapy underway to address certain conditions of vision impairment; and included input from two patients – one who is awaiting gene therapy and another who was the first person in the UK to receive voretigene neparvovec [Luxturna] - who reported that his vision had significantly improved.

Highlights from the scientific day include the talks of keynote speakers with experience both in clinical practice and research. **Dr Patrick Yu-Wai-Man** is an academic neuro-ophthalmologist with a specialist research interest in genetic eye diseases and talked about the use of gene therapy for Leber Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON). Recent research by **Dr Yu-Wai-man**, published in Science Translational Medicine, is promising, indicating that patients with LHON who have experienced loss of vision for up to one year can benefit from gene therapy. He holds a tenured Faculty position at the University of Cambridge, affiliated with the Cambridge Centre for Brain Repair and the MRC Mitochondrial Biology Unit, while has joint clinical appointments at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge and Moorfields Eye Hospital in London as an Honorary Consultant Neuro-Ophthalmologist.

Another keynote speaker was Professor of Molecular Ophthalmology at UCL Institute of Ophthalmology, **Mariya Moosajee**, who talked about non-viral therapeutic approaches for inherited retinal diseases. These alternative DNA plasmid delivery vehicles can hold genes of any size and have the capacity to reduce the immune response. Professor Moosajee is also a Consultant Ophthalmologist in Genetic



Behind the scenes:

Dr Rachel Bermingham presenting on set for Retina 2021 at Agency X, Dublin 2.

Photo by Konstantina Karagkiozeli

Eye Disease at Moorfields Eye Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and Group Leader of Ocular Genomics and Therapeutics at the Francis Crick Institute in London.

Also presenting on the day were: **Professor Artur V. Cideciyan** from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA. **Associate Professor Bo Chen** in the Departments of Ophthalmology and Neuroscience at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. **Dr Raymond Wong** who is a principal investigator at the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA), the University of Melbourne and a guest professor at Shenzhen Eye Hospital (China). **Dr Christina Zeitz**, research director (DR2) at INSERM, France, and Professor Rob Collin, full

professor and a principal investigator at the Radboud University Medical Center (RadboudUMC) in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, and affiliated with the Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour.

The Scientific Day also included early investigators presentations, as well as posters and sizzlers. The winners of the Geraldine Duggan Early Investigator Award (sponsored by Novartis Ireland) and Poster Sizzler Award (sponsored by Janssen) were the PhD students Laura Whelan (TCD) and Ailis Moran (UCD), accordingly.

Talks were given on the role of the PPI in research, from the keynote speaker **Edel Murphy** who is the national Programme Manager for the PPI Ignite Network, and **Dr Orla Galvin**, the Director of Research Policy with Retina International (RI) spoke about research into the patient experience of accessing genetic testing internationally.

**Dr Natalie Hudson** gave an update on the work of Retina Network Ireland, an all-island network for early to mid-career researchers, clinicians and allied healthcare professionals in the area of vision and retinal disease who are based in, or affiliated with, Irish Institutions, launched by Fighting Blindness in 2020.

The second day (the public engagement day) focused exclusively on people living with sight loss and their families and was aimed at bringing the latest developments in eye treatments, alongside motivational talks on living our best lives in the face of adversity. Participants had the opportunity to put their questions to the range of speakers.

**Dr Emma Duignan**, Consultant Ophthalmologist at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear featured on Virgin Media's Ireland AM on Saturday 6 November in an excellent segment on eye health and to highlight the public engagement day taking place that day.

The Scientific Day will be available on demand and can be viewed [www.retina.ie](http://www.retina.ie); while the public engagement day is available to view at [www.fightingblindness.ie](http://www.fightingblindness.ie).

## Contributory Article

## The HEWE Study: The HHealth and WEllbeing effects of the disciplinary process on doctors in Ireland

The Medical Council of Ireland is currently supporting and facilitating a confidential and anonymised RCSI research project by agreeing to contact MC registered practitioners on behalf of the researchers.

This independent and Irish Research Council funded research relates to medical practitioners in Ireland, and their experiences and perceptions of the disciplinary process, and possible health or wellbeing effects relating to same.

The survey findings will provide an understanding of the impact of disciplinary processes on doctor's health and well-being, and assist in

raising awareness of these issues for all parties with a shared interest. The option to participate in this research is being sent to all MC registered practitioners who have consented to contact in relation to non-statutory matters.

All information given in this survey will be treated in strict confidence and only used for the purpose to which you agree to it being collected i.e. to

inform The HEWE Study. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. The IMC has not had any input into study concept or design, nor will it have any input into result analysis or reporting.

If you have consented to contact by the MC for non-statutory matters, you may have received an email and survey link on 4 October 2021. It is hoped that this will be recirculated again in early November. We would hope the doctors who have received the relevant email and survey link may consider responding.

The Principle Investigator of the study, Dr Grainne McNally, can be contacted at [gmcnally@rcsi.com](mailto:gmcnally@rcsi.com)

## ICO Governance – new committee structure

As part of the review and configuration of the ICO governance structures in line with the legal requirements of the Charities Regulator, the committee structures of the College were redesigned to reflect the core mission of the ICO as a training and educational body.

The new committees which came into effect following the ICO AGM on September 25 are as follows;

- Training Advisory Committee
- Training Standards and Regulations Committee
- Scientific and Professional Development Committee
- Governance and Nominations Committee
- Finance and Audit Committee
- Service Development Committee

Incoming President, Tim Fulcher gave a presentation to ICO members at the virtual AGM outlining the structure and core functions of the new committees and a call for expressions of interest was circulated to our membership post meeting. The Board wishes to thank all our members who contacted the College to express their interest in a Committee role and look forward to

working alongside the newly appointed members.

The committees are structured to ensure a balanced representation across the various areas of practice. Each committee will be chaired by a Board member and will have a clear remit and work plan approved by the Board, to which they will report. From time to time, non-college members, with specific expertise, may be co-opted in an advisory capacity to a committee, if approved by the Board.

The role of committees is to carry out more detailed work at the request of the Board and make recommendations to the Board on these matters so as to free the Board to focus on policy, strategy, monitoring and compliance.

The membership term will be for two years and the committees will be kept to a minimum size to encourage active participation from all members.

# ICO supports call on government to reduce delays and costs in resolving clinical negligence disputes

The ICO has united with other Irish healthcare organisations calling on government to introduce the necessary legislation for pre-action protocols without delay.

The coalition of eight leading healthcare organisations co signed a letter which was sent to the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee T.D. on November 5 by the Medical Protection Society (MPS).

In the correspondence, the coalition welcomed the government's support for pre-action protocols but urged that the relevant regulations be introduced as soon as possible. The coalition highlights that this important step would reduce the delays that injured patients face before receiving compensation, reduce the stress that patients and healthcare professionals endure, and also reduce legal costs for all parties.

Unlike other countries, solicitors in Ireland are not subject to more extensive obligations to provide specific information and medical records in a way that could resolve clinical negligence claims earlier in the process without the need for court proceedings. A pre-action protocol provides the opportunity to investigate and resolve claims sooner, without the

need to go court, by promoting early identification and communication of the issues in dispute between the parties.

The letter was coordinated by Medical Protection Society, and signed by the Irish College of Ophthalmologists, Irish Hospital Consultants Association, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Irish Dental Association, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Faculty of Dentistry RCSI, and Irish College of General Practitioners.

The joint letter states that the current Irish legal system is adversarial, and often resolves clinical negligence claims only once a trial date has been set. In Ireland, only 53% of cases are resolved at the pre-action stage (with 43.8% resolved post-proceedings and 2.5% resolved at trial). By way of contrast, in England and Wales where pre-action protocols have been in place for over 20 years, over 70% of claims are resolved prior to the issue of court proceedings (27.9% resolved post-proceedings and 0.6% proceeded to trial).

It also highlights the emotional harm the majority of patient claimants report experiencing while making a claim and that healthcare professional also feel the same.

Legal costs are also much higher for all parties. The National Treasury Management Agency's 2020 annual report shows that legal and expert costs represented 24% of the total costs of clinical claims (€76.8 million of the €321.8 million).

The introduction of pre-action protocols would encourage an early exchange of information between claimants and defendants as well as the early identification of the issues, with the result being that many more cases would be resolved at the pre-action stage.

The reform was backed by the Review Group chaired by Mr Justice Peter Kelly, which recommended that the Minister for Justice give early attention to the introduction of the regulations prescribing the pre-action protocols in clinical negligence cases, and it has also since been recommended by a number of other expert groups.

Co-signatories of the letter acknowledge that while the pandemic has obviously changed the immediate priorities, it is their collective belief that this change can be implemented promptly as the legal powers required to make this change already exist.



# Designing a Lean Six Sigma pathway for care of ocular hypertension

As part of the Higher Medical Training Programme, the College has commenced a pilot programme for HMT trainees to participate in the UCD Lean Academy 'Professional Certificate Process Improvement in Health Systems (Green Belt)'

Implementation of new eye care pathways will form a significant part of HMTs' future roles as Consultant Medical Ophthalmologists, as care is redirected away from acute services to community locations under the current Model of Care. The purpose of participation in this programme is for HMTs to acquire proficiency in process improvement methodologies such as Lean, Six Sigma and the Model for Improvement with person-centered approaches to care.

Participating in this first pilot are two HMT trainees, Dr Emer Doolan and Dr Shane O'Regan, Miss Yvonne Delaney, Dean of Postgraduate Education and Rebecca Martin, ICO Training Programme Manager. The team enrolled in the Green Belt programme which commenced in September 2021 and will be completed in May 2022.

The eye care process that will be central to the team's first project is based on work already carried out by Ms Aoife Doyle in Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) Glaucoma Clinic and Dr Margaret Morgan, Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist in CHO 7. The clinic model for management of patients with ocular hypertension will be based on the existing glaucoma assessment clinic at RVEEH, with assessments carried out in the community by the optometrists and nurses on the integrated eye care team and with virtual review by the consultant medical ophthalmologist.

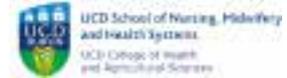
The Green Belt team will study and document the new pathways and processes required to develop and implement this novel eye care pathway for patients with ocular hypertension (OHT).

The project will document each step in the relocation process that is required for the successful transfer of patient care including: identification of patients from the existing RVEEH

hospital database, documentation of clinical and geographical eligibility criteria, description of the necessary networked IT platforms for electronic transfer of clinical data across two clinical sites, a literature review of OHT including agreement on a minimum clinical dataset for best practice and method/s for patient communication to inform them of the

change to their eye care.

It is hoped that the clear documentation of the new processes involved in this new eye care pathway will bring clarity to the methods, resources and staffing required for successful implementation, enabling easier adoption and replication in other clinical locations and CHOs.



Dr Alison Blake is pictured with Dr Michael Brennan, former president of the AAO and Annual Montgomery Lecturer (2018), at the AAO 2021 Conference, which took place in New Orleans from the 12-15 November. Our congratulations to Alison on her recent appointment as a trustee for the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

# Minister for Health officially opens recently refurbished Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital

Minister for Health, Mr Stephen Donnelly, TD, officially opened the newly refurbished emergency department at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital on 10 November.

As Ireland's only specialist hospital for ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, the emergency department (ED) provides a vital emergency care service for eye and ear, nose and throat conditions.

In the hospital's current strategic plan, "Seeing the Future: Strategic Plan 2021-26," demand for services is forecast to be driven by the over 65 age group, which is expected to grow by 37% between 2021 and 2031. The new ED has been specifically developed and reconfigured to meet this increased demand.

The renovated ED includes the introduction of a new phone triage system that was introduced during

the recent COVID-19 lockdowns and this is designed to prioritise access for those most in need, reduce wait times and establish more efficient patient flows. It also forms a key part of the hospital's plan to further modernise its outpatient and its theatres over the next five years.

The RVEEH has embraced the Government's Slaintecare programme and policy approved Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology Model of Care key recommendation to deliver much needed services through local community healthcare organisations (CHOs). These include community care locations in Wicklow Town,

Tallaght and Churchtown, all of which are part of CHO 6 (Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin South East) and CHO 7 (Kildare, West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South West, Dublin South City).

Speaking at the official opening, Minister for Health, Mr Stephen Donnelly, TD, said, "I'm delighted to be able to open the newly refurbished Emergency Department (ED). The ED has been redesigned to better help meet the needs of patients now and in the future and the approach implements the insight we have gained over the past two years while managing the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to commend the team here in the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital for their ambition and commitment to improving patient care."

Mr Declan Lyons, CEO, Ireland's East Hospital Group welcomed the changes to the ED saying, "Today marks another milestone for the Royal Victoria Eye & Ear Hospital. The opening of this newly refurbished emergency department is a positive step in transforming and improving the clinical services for patients requiring emergency specialist eye care and an excellent example of the commitment of IEHG, the HSE and our hospitals working together to improve and deliver on some of the most pressing challenges in the health system."

Mr Donal Brosnahan, Clinical Director, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital added: "The new Emergency Department is the first significant step in the redevelopment of the physical infrastructure of the Hospital. This refurbishment has modernised and expanded the clinical space, built three new triage bays and developed a new phone triage area/system for prioritising patients with the greatest clinical need. We would like to thank the Ireland East Hospital Group and HSE Estates for supporting this development."



Mr Donal Brosnahan, Clinical Director, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, pictured with Minister for Health, Mr Stephen Donnelly, at the official opening of the renovated Emergency Department on November 10, 2021