



Dear Colleagues

Well it has been quite the few months for us all in health care!

Due to recent activity in the Hospital we were unable to keep to our regular quarterly schedule of producing Connect. But as the restrictions lift nationally it most definitely back to business albeit not quite as normal. We continue to see an increase in activity in the Hospital and are working through the guidance on restarting elective activity and incorporating the guidance into the Hospital's recovery plan. We are incorporating feedback from our GP colleagues on the Local Integrated Care Committee into this recovery plan.

The phrase #HoldFim is one you will hear a lot over that national airwaves and also through our Hospital channels. It is what we know we must all do to ensure that we can continue to take care of each other, our families and the people most at risk our patients.

Despite the hold that was put on construction activity here on the Hospital campus we are delighted to have construction workers back onsite with the new Dialysis Unit on plan to open in October and the Day Surgery Unit later this autumn.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts and support of the Hospital during this unprecedented time in our health service.

Best wishes

Lucy Nugent
Chief Executive
Tallaght University Hospital

GEDI

During the COVID-19 crisis the Gerontological Emergency Department Intervention (GEDI) team have gathered information on topics relevant to older patients.

There is a selection of information sheets on exercise, mental health and available supports information sheets to patients and community counterparts so people have some tangible supports as they cocoon.

Whilst the materials are aimed at older adults they are applicable to most people. You can refer patients to the materials available on the TUH website via this [link](#).



Day Surgery Unit Update

Like the rest of the Hospital the last three months have been an unusual time for staff that are working on delivering the Tallaght Cross West Day Surgery project.

Many of the clinical and support staff were redeployed to the front line in the fight against COVID-19. The national closure of building projects to help contain the spread of a pandemic was something that no one could have predicted at the start of the year. Like the rest of the Hospital these challenges have made us discover new ways of working, with many of the staff working on the project becoming experts at video conferencing. Technology has enabled some of our project team members to work off site which has enabled project work to continue unaffected during these challenging times.

Construction on the site resumed in May and a number of key construction milestones walls have been reached. The picture below was taken about a month before the closure of building projects in March. Since this photo was taken many of the walls on the site have been closed in and with each passing day the site is beginning to look more and more like a day surgery unit.



The coming months will continue to be exciting and challenging as the completion date arrives in September of this year and the project enters the commissioning phase. Watch this space for further updates over the coming months!

The Nightingale Challenge

Investing in young nurses and midwives is essential for improving health and health care in Ireland. The Nightingale Challenge, running as part of the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife offers an opportunity to be part of a global movement to empower the next generation of nurses and midwives as leaders, practitioners, and advocates in the promotion of positive health.

The Nightingale Challenge in Ireland is being led by the Chief Nursing Officer in the Department of Health and Dr Geraldine Shaw, Director, Office of the Nursing & Midwifery Services, HSE.

The two programmes available for the 2020 Irish Nightingale Challenge are A) Mentorship and Career Development – organised by the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Health and B) Leadership Development programme – organised by the Office of Nursing and Midwifery Services Director, HSE.

Congratulations to Rachel O'Byrne O'Reilly, Clinical Placement Coordinator, Nurse Practice Development and Staff Nurse Rose Tully, Haematology Day Ward who are the successful TUH candidates for programmes A and B respectively. #yearofnurseandmidwifeattuh



Pictured from left to right Áine Lynch, Director of Nursing; Rachel O'Byrne O'Reilly, Clinical Placement Coordinator in Nurse Practice Development and Staff Nurse Rose Tully, Haematology Day Ward following the announcement of the TUH Nightingale Challenge Candidates.

Oncology Day Service Temporarily Moved

To make the delivery of our service as safe as possible to this vulnerable group of patients, the Oncology Day Ward has temporarily moved offsite.

Now relocated on the 5th floor of the Russell Building this was a mammoth task taken on by a team of many disciplines across the Hospital, another incredible example of #TUHWorkingTogether. The space was made available by the Institute of Population Health at Trinity College Dublin.



The recently located Oncology Day Service with great views of the Dublin Mountains

TUH COVID-19 Research

Congratulations to Professor Mark Little who received confirmation of a research grant recently to examine whether people taking immunosuppressive medications are at higher risk of contracting [#COVID19](#) or are protected against it.

The grant he received is part of a €3.4M investment in 21 new research projects to tackle COVID-19 by the Health Research Board and the Irish Research Council.



Prof Mark Little

In summary his project will determine the outcome of patients taking immunosuppressive medication who contract COVID 19. This will enable clinicians to target accurate advice regarding cocooning to these patients, and to inform development of new therapies and biomarkers'. You can hear about it directly via this [link](#)

Provision of Cardiac Rehabilitation Services during COVID 19



As with so many of our patient cohorts, patients with cardiovascular disease are a high risk group. A decision was made to stop the Cardiac Rehabilitation (CR) programme from Monday 16th March. Given the importance of CR in reducing hospital readmissions and cardiac mortality it was very important for the rehabilitation to be delivered using an alternative mode of delivery.

The CR are running a 'Heart Manual' programme with patients in CCU, this is a well-established NHS evidence-based programmes for individuals recovering from myocardial infarction and revascularisation. The CR nursing staff have been trained in delivering the 'Heart Manual' programme and were already using the programme as an alternative for patients who were unable to commit to the hospital based programme.

The 40 patients who had their cardiac rehabilitation programme paused last Friday after attending the Hospital based programme for two weeks will receive a manual 'Cardiac Rehab for All'. This is a very informative manual which explains all four phases of CR and address the Phase 3 exercise and education program in detail and their cardiac risk factors. In addition to the manual there will be on-line platform available soon for patients to access which will include a CR exercise class that they can do from their own home. These patients will also be followed up with a phone call for a number of weeks, assessing the patient's progress as above.

Charts will be reviewed for weekly clinics and as much as possible hosted by telephone with members of the multidisciplinary team i.e. social worker, psychologist, available to discuss particular problems with patients. There will be a Q&A telephone line to discuss any queries in relation to their cardiac diagnosis and to address any concerns.

Nursing Home Support

This is an extremely challenging time for our healthcare colleagues in the 15 local nursing homes that care for over 1,000 residents, many of which use the services of TUH. The residents in these homes represent one of the most vulnerable groups at risk during this COVID-19 outbreak.

In a new service set up by Professor Sean Kennelly and Advanced Nurse Practitioner Claire Noonan the Hospital has taken a targeted approach to supporting nursing homes. The service liaises directly with nursing homes regarding the medical needs of residents to support both COVID and Non- COVID related healthcare issues.

The team have a dedicated contact phone for medical officers and directors of nursing in local nursing homes to facilitate calls 24x7.

Video and tele-conferences facilities have also been set up to help review residents and conduct meetings with Medical Officers and the Director of Nursing within the nursing home to reduce any unnecessary transfers to the Hospital while offering as optimal care as possible within long term care facilities.



Professor Sean Kennelly and Advanced Nurse Practitioner Claire Noonan who are running the new Nursing Home Support Service

TUH Receive Enterprise Ireland Grant

A project led by Dr. John Cullen, Consultant in General Internal & Respiratory Medicine for TUH has received funding through the Enterprise Ireland Small Business Innovation Research (SIBR). The Enterprise Ireland programme encourages businesses to explore and co-design unique solutions with public sector teams through competitive challenges.

There are two health challenges being funded out of five challenges. The TUH project will focus on improving the care of, and empowering, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients in the community. The challenge will look at solutions to improve COPD patient self-management and incentivise affected patients to take control of their health.

The total fund for this project is €200k, the next step in the process is to issue the challenge on e-tenders by May 1st with the challenge concluded by 2021.



Pictured from left to right at the announcement of the Enterprise Ireland's SBIR Challenges were Maeve Murphy, Health & Social Care Professions Manager; Dave Wall, Director of ICT TUH; Lorraine Smyth, Communications & Innovations Lead Office of the Director of the Digital Academy and Open Innovation HSE; Dr. John Cullen, Consultant in General Internal & Respiratory Medicine, Sarah Cunneen, Physiotherapist TUH and John Kelly, Deputy Chief Executive, TUH.

COVID-19 Update from the Vascular Neurology Research Group

Locally and regionally, to limit ED attendances for patients with suspected TIAs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vascular Neurology and Age-Related Healthcare / Stroke Medicine Consultants continue to run a daily, 'One-stop, RASP Service', co-directed by Prof. McCabe and Dr. Dan Ryan, in close collaboration with colleagues in Vascular Surgery, Cardiology, Phlebotomy, Medical Administration and Radiology.

They continue to accept e-mail referrals from local GPs, ED Physicians and Hospital Consultant colleagues via the local RASP e-referral pathway, with a view to assessing all patients with 'suspected TIAs' within 24 hours or on the same day if they have 'higher-risk' clinical symptoms.

The team have maintained access to expedited outpatient specialised blood tests and neurovascular investigations, with face-to-face assessments in appropriate PPE by a Consultant with expertise in TIA and stroke care to establish an accurate diagnosis and commence urgent treatment to optimally prevent a potentially-disabling stroke on the same day. With this expedited approach, international studies indicate that one can prevent → 80% of strokes following a TIA if we are given the opportunity to do so.

Dr. Allan McCarthy and Prof Dominick McCabe have also established telephone clinics to review all of the scheduled follow-up Neurovascular patients under the care of the Vascular Neurology service at TUH to maintain some continuity of care for these high-risk patients during the pandemic. Video consultations will also take place when the system is set up by ICT. To ensure access to urgent decision-making in patients with carotid or vertebral artery stenosis, Prof. McCabe continues to chair the weekly Neurovascular MDT meeting onsite which was established in 2006. They have secured new remote video-conferencing access for Neurology, Vascular Surgery and ARHC/Stroke Medicine staff thanks to the support of colleagues in the ICT Dept., as well as 'physically-distanced' conference facilities onsite. At this meeting, the Consultants reach an evidence-based consensus decision regarding the suitability of carotid endarterectomy, endovascular treatment or optimal medical treatment for patients presenting with symptomatic or asymptomatic carotid and other arterial stenoses. As a Clinical Academic group in a teaching Hospital, they never miss an opportunity to learn, so the Vascular Neurology Research team are also auditing the impact which the COVID-19 pandemic is having on this patient population, their treatment advice, their access to urgent intervention and outcomes of treatment.

The Neurology Department also launched an electronic advice and guidance system for GPs concerned about patients with new or existing neurological problems who may have difficulty accessing conventional routes of care during the COVID-19 pandemic. A dedicated consultant-provided service for GPs in the TUH catchment email address was set up. This aims to respond to all queries within one working day. If the clinical situation necessitates, patients will be offered a rapid-access appointment by telephone/audiovisual clinic or in urgent cases, will be assessed at the Neurology Outpatient Department in the Simms Building.

In addition to this new initiative, the Neurology Department continues to provide ongoing care to thousands of patients with neurological disorders during the COVID-19 crisis. Acute neurology specialist inpatient care continues uninterrupted, as well as a consultation service to other specialities. Neurology provides a 24 hour on-call service to TUH, in addition to participating in the acute stroke rota.

Virtual/telephone clinics are being operated daily by the consultant team. Neurology also continues to jointly operate the daily consultant-led Rapid Access Stroke Prevention service, in conjunction with colleagues in Age Related Healthcare. The Neurology Clinical Nurse Specialist service is operating a number of daily telephone clinics for patients with Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Parkinson's Disease and Neuro-inflammatory disorders, particularly as so many of these patients fall into the "vulnerable group" cohort at this time. Dr. Sean O'Dowd, working with Medical Photography also created a short video for patients with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) and Corticobasal Degeneration (CBD) during COVID-19.

From an international perspective Prof McCabe has also collaborated with the recent chair of the European Society for Vascular Surgery guidelines committee writing group on the Management of Atherosclerotic Carotid and Vertebral Artery Disease. He has also worked with Prof Ross Naylor, Leicester, UK, to write a 'topical review' regarding optimal antiplatelet strategies in patients with TIA or minor stroke associated with atherosclerotic carotid stenosis during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be of assistance to Neurologists, Vascular Surgeons, Stroke Physicians, General Physicians and Neuroradiologists dealing with such high risk patients during this pandemic whilst we await the next set of guidelines from the ESVS in 2022.



If you would like any more information about any articles in the Connect or have suggestions for future editions please do get in touch

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