



Launch of the Saolta University Health Care Group Patient and Public Engagement Strategy 2020-2023

The Saolta University Health Care Group recently published the first group-wide Patient and Public Engagement Strategy 2020-2023. This Strategy builds on work which has taken place over the last number of years in each of the Saolta Group hospitals, to improve and embed positive patient and public engagement.

The Strategy is based around three key themes that emerged during the consultation process undertaken to develop it. These are: Communications; Working with others; and Working in partnership with patients, families and carers. There are projects identified to bring these themes to life over the next three years. Some of the initiatives already underway include the rollout of the national communications programme for clinical teams and optimising the use of technology and eHealth initiatives to enhance patient communication.

Commenting Tony Canavan Saolta Group CEO said, "The Saolta Group is committed to further developing a culture of strong engagement with our patients and our communities. We know that listening and learning from our patients' experience enables us to deliver better care and improves health outcomes."

Paul Hooton, Saolta Group Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery added, "We know our patients and their carers want to be engaged in decisions about their health, and those who are more engaged generally experience better outcomes. Over the next three years through the implementation of this Strategy our intention is to build on work already underway. This will include ensuring patients are involved in decisions about their own care and seeking patient feedback about their experiences. This work will be led by the Directors of Nursing on each of our hospital sites and I look forward to supporting them."

Jean Kelly, former Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery at the Saolta Group who led on the development of the Strategy said, "The importance of patients taking an active role in managing their own health is crucial as our population is living longer often with multiple chronic diseases. A key focus of Sláintecare is keeping people well in their own homes and shifting the focus of care to the community. Key to that is the development of active partnerships between patients, their health providers and the wider community."

Copies of the Patient and Public Engagement Strategy 2020-2023 are available to download [here](#).

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Chief Executive Officer Saolta Group

Dear colleagues

I would like to begin by thanking each and every one of you, for your hard work and dedication over the past 12 months; particularly in maintaining services in what have been very difficult circumstances. I do not under estimate the sacrifices and efforts that each of you has made in order to be able to provide the best care possible to patients.

I would also encourage you to take stock over the coming weeks of what you have contributed to this incredible national effort and to acknowledge the contribution of those who work with you, in your team, in your hospital or indeed in your hospital group.

While there are many challenges ahead, the prospect of new vaccines means that we can look forward to 2021 with hope and some optimism.

As we exit the year, I have one last 'ask' of you. We all have a responsibility to do what we can to limit the spread of COVID-19. As healthcare workers, I believe that we have a particular responsibility to lead by example. My 'ask' is that you take up this responsibility not just while you are working but also at home and in your own community.

There is no doubt that 2020 has brought some positive developments together with its many challenges. I look forward to building on those positives with you in the coming year but for the moment, I just want to wish you and your families a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas.

Tony Canavan
Chief Executive Officer



Tony Canavan, CEO

Chief Operations Officer Saolta Group

Dear colleagues

As we come to the end of a year like no other I want to thank you all for all that you have done to deliver care to patients across the Saolta Group.

I know 2020 was extremely challenging for everyone both professionally and personally, however recent positive news about the roll out of the vaccination programme means we can all be hopeful for better days ahead next year.

All our hospitals continue to be really busy and I want to assure you that we are doing everything we can at Group and at individual hospital level to support our services, this includes recruiting more staff, developing new facilities and expanding our services where possible.

I hope you all get the opportunity to have a break over Christmas and spend time with your families. This will be a very different Christmas and we all must continue to do everything we can to protect ourselves and those around us, particularly the most vulnerable. It is essential we all keep our social contacts to those closest to us and keep our guard up to enable us all to get through Christmas safely.

Finally I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and I look forward to working with you in 2021.

Ann Cosgrove
Chief Operations Officer



Ann Cosgrove, COO

Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery

Dear colleagues

It gives me great pleasure to introduce myself to you as Paul Hooton, the Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery for Saolta. I returned from the UK to commence in this position in September and I am delighted to be here. Although only a few months in post I am slowly getting to meet staff and am looking forward to 2021 where I will continue to visit your hospitals and meet with many more of you. I am looking forward to working with all of you in the future and continuing to support you in delivering high quality safe and effective care.

I know that 2020 has been a very difficult and challenging year for all of us. Who would have thought this time last year that we were facing a global Pandemic. I want to thank you all for your commitment, your resilience and for putting the patient first in your care during these times.

As we are getting closer to the availability of a vaccine we can hopefully look forward to more enjoyable times in 2021.



We commenced our flu vaccine campaign at the beginning of October. This year we have set a target of 75% for the flu uptake vaccine. To date across our sites we have vaccinated over 55% of staff. I would like to thank everyone who has taken the vaccine and encourage those of you who haven't had the opportunity, to make every effort. The flu can be devastating for the most vulnerable and as healthcare workers one of the most important things we can do to protect our patients is to get the vaccine.

I am delighted that our Patient and Public Engagement Strategy 2020-2023 was launched this month and I am looking forward to your support in its implementation over the coming year.

Christmas is truly a time to be thankful for all that we have, and I am so thankful to all of you for what we have achieved through your hard work over the past year. I would like to wish you and your family a very happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Paul Hooton
Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery

Update from the Saolta Project Management Office



The Project Management Office (PMO) is primarily focused on bringing a programmatic approach to service development and delivery across Saolta Hospitals and beyond.

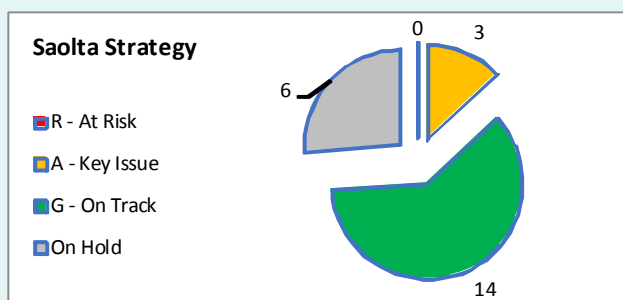
The Saolta Portfolio Dashboard sets out the priority

projects for the Hospital Group and is divided into:

- Saolta Strategy Projects
- Sláintecare Integration Fund Projects
- Other Key Projects—such as the implementation of the National Trauma Implementation Strategy and Cross Border Working

Many of these projects have been re-scoped in recent months to support COVID-19 recovery planning.

Saolta Strategy Projects



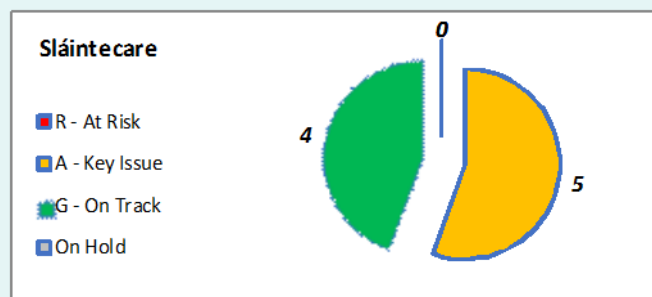
The Saolta Strategy projects are overseen by the Strategy Sub Group of the Saolta Board.

While 6 of the projects remain on hold, this is due in the main either to COVID-19 or dependency on national developments.

Over recent months there has been considerable progress including:-

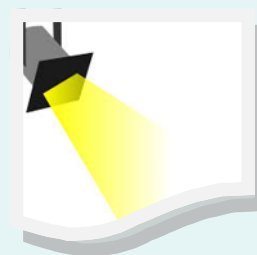
- The completion of the Demand and Capacity Analysis for the Model 3 Hospitals.
- Ongoing Trial of Concept for the Integrated Governance Project with the Cancer and Women's and Children's MCANs.
- The publication of the Saolta Patient Engagement Strategy 2020-2023.
- Commencement of the Clinical Handover Project and GP Engagement Project.

Sláintecare Integration Fund Projects



The Sláintecare Integration Fund Projects were placed on hold nationally from March until August 2020 as a response to COVID-19, with the exception of Telemedicine for Cystic Fibrosis Patients - GUH/CHO 1 & CH West.

These projects have all now resumed and while there are some posts outstanding across a number of projects, each of the projects are delivering considerable benefits to patients and services.



Spotlight On:-

Galway Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons (GICOP)

This joint Saolta & Community Healthcare West (CHW) project was funded by Sláintecare.

Work commenced in late 2019 to introduce the Older Persons Specialist Ambulatory Care Hub Team for Galway City/Tuam/Loughrea/Athenry area. This community based multidisciplinary team are tasked with providing specialist comprehensive geriatric assessment and treatment to older people presenting with the complex conditions of falls, frailty and dementia, providing care closer to home and keeping older people well and out of hospital.

The Hub service is currently based in the Clinical Research Facility at UHG campus with a plan to move to Galway City Primary Care Centre in Shantalla once completed. The Specialist Team led by Dr Michelle Canavan, travel to clinics in Tuam and Loughrea twice a month, to see patients in their own locality and/or in their own homes. To date over 932 contacts by the multidisciplinary team have taken place and work is ongoing to develop and integrate the links with primary care, acute services and psychiatry of old age.

In addition, working with the partners in primary care and Galway City Council the team have assisted in producing the "Living Well during COVID-19" Information Booklet for Older people in the Galway area.



Update from the Saolta Project Management Office



The GICOP Team (Physiotherapy absent from photo)

This is a hugely positive and exciting development for Older Person's Services within the region and we will continue to work collaboratively with National ICPOP, CH West, Sláintecare and older people to develop local services, deliver on the programme objectives with the ongoing support from the Saolta Programme Management Office.



Watch out for:-

Enhanced Community Services

In responding to COVID-19, there is unprecedented investment in the Health Service through the Winter Plan, Enhanced Community Services and Care Redesign. Enhanced Community Services will see major development within the community which in turn will mean that services are delivered closer to patients' homes with care pathways that patients can easily access, and service providers can easily deliver.



Nationally, this includes the full roll out of 96 Community Health Networks (CHNs) supported by 32 Specialist Ambulatory Hubs for both Older Persons Services and Chronic Disease Management.

These Ambulatory Hubs will support access to diagnostics, specialist services and specialist opinions in order to support early intervention and specialist care within the community for endocrine, respiratory and cardiac chronic diseases.

The pyramid above outlines the model of care in the development of Specialist Ambulatory Hubs for the management of chronic disease.

- Specialist Ambulatory Hubs will each serve three CHNs (or a population approx. 150,000 people).
- 18 hubs nationally are being developed (associated with 11 hospitals in Phase 1) there are 2 in CH West as part of Phase 1 for both Chronic Disease and Older Person's Services.
- The remainder of CH West and CHO 1 will be rolled out as part of Phase 2 (planned for late 2020/early 2021).

The successful implementation of these programmes of work will be dependant on a number of other key enablers and work is ongoing at a national level in:-

- ICT supports - to ensure that professionals can access patient information regardless of location.
- Community diagnostics—with a national investment programme over the coming years to improve direct access GP diagnostic services.
- A programmatic roll out across acute and community with services supported by Clinical Programmes, PMOs and others.

What will this mean for Saolta Hospitals and Staff?

This major investment in community services will ultimately serve to fast-track the full implementation of Sláintecare in providing appropriate care close to home for patients and carers.

For patients and their families, this will mean a more patient-centred, joined up service, with better supports in the community and through hospital avoidance reduce risk to the more vulnerable.

This in turn should mean that there will be less pressure on our acute hospital services with alternative hospital avoidance pathways as well as enhanced early discharge and transition of patients between hospital and community.

Each Ambulatory Care Hub will be linked to a local hospital and will work closely with the specialist services in the hospital.

While staff will be recruited to support the Specialist Ambulatory Hubs, there will be expectation that specialist teams will look beyond the hospital in working differently with community colleagues, and attend the hubs in delivering the more specialist services out of hospital.

Agreeing and implementing pathways of care to ensure that we can optimise these new services will be key. It will be crucial that staff across the Saolta Hospitals work in partnership with CHOs and others in this process.

Women's and Children's Managed Clinical and Academic Network (MCAN)

It was a year with many challenges and the Women's and Children's MCAN would like to update you on some clinical, strategic and governance issues. It has been a busy year seeing the introduction of the MCAN model along with several new appointments of staff and retirements.

There have been numerous achievements and quality improvement initiatives in place providing a greater, enhanced service to our patients, all of which have been supported by the hard work, dedication and commitment from staff on each site.

There have been many challenges to overcome during this year. The cooperation and commitment of staff was critical to the establishment of new ways of delivering services since March, in the interest of delivering safe patient care in a very challenging environment of a global COVID-19 pandemic.

The MCAN is growing its team and we want to briefly update you on the status of a number of items underway:

Clinical Care

The results of the 2020 National Maternity Experience Survey have been published, showing that nationally 85% of participants had a good or a very good experience of maternity care in Ireland. Most women who took part said that they were treated with respect and dignity, and had confidence and trust in staff. This information provides us with valuable insights into their experience of maternity services in our hospitals and in the community from our partners in care.

In response to the survey findings each site has developed a quality improvement plan with clearly defined actions to improve maternity care.

Our hospital sites also celebrated International Children's Day (20th November) and World Prematurity Day (17th November) to raise awareness around issues related to optimising development and outcomes for infants to ensure that they reach their full potential.

Strategy

The MCAN is currently supporting the development of the Saolta Paediatric Integrated Strategy.

Developing a dedicated paediatric network across Saolta offers us the opportunity to bring together a range of professionals with specialist expertise, standardising care and access for children.

This will help to ensure that paediatric resources are used to maximum effect and high quality services and patient pathways are standardised for paediatric and neonatal care across the Group. This involves engagement from all of the key stakeholders involved in the safe provision of care of these patients.

The Women's and Children's Annual Clinical Report 2019 has been finalised and published. It represents the level of activity of services across all of our 5 hospital sites. The aim of this report is to highlight the clinical, business and academic achievements and activity as well as service developments across the Saolta Group in the previous year.

Governance

Weekly MCAN meetings continue to progress matters and is seeing significant contribution from each of the individual hospital sites in the Saolta Group.

The Neonatal Steering Group, under the Neonatal Clinical Services Strategy, is up and running under the governance of the MCAN Clinical Director and Specialty Lead. The aim of the Steering Group is to provide a forum for key clinical and strategic issues related to Neonatal service across the Saolta Group to be discussed and managed in order to inform and drive improvements in clinical care and outcomes.

Planning and Performance

In continuing to improve the quality of care we provide to our patients we are developing a suite of site based clinical and business key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will be reviewed as our measurement of performance to strengthen performance management culture and communicate urgent and important information.

Our priorities for 2021 are continued commitment to promote and provide the best possible service for the patient and develop and support the sites and service developments which aim to improve how we work. We acknowledge the collaborative engagement of our sites and teams and look forward to developing the MCAN and services it provides.

Wishing you and your families a Happy and Healthy Christmas.



New Cardiology Services rolled out to Primary Care Centres in Galway and Roscommon as part of Sláintecare

New cardiology services have been introduced to three Primary Care Centres in Galway (Ballinasloe, Mountbellew, Portumna) and to Monksland in Roscommon as part of the expansion of the Heart Failure Service developed by Portlincula University Hospital and Galway Primary Care.

The Heart Failure Service received €330k from the Sláintecare Integration Fund at the end of 2019. This additional funding will be used to improve the heart failure service for patients and provide care closer to home, in line with Sláintecare. The funding will be used to recruit new staff and purchase equipment to enable the cardiac investigations department to assess and diagnose patients in the community and reduce the need for hospital appointments for these tests.

An Advanced Nurse Practitioner will also be recruited to support the needs of patients in the community and avoid hospital admission where appropriate. For more click [here](#).



At Ballinasloe Health Centre, from left: Laura Moylan, Chief Cardiac Physiologist; Dr Aidan Flynn, Consultant Cardiologist, PUH; Linda Grealish-Lardner, Sláintecare Administration, Galway Primary Care; Tom Dyer, Quality & Safety Facilitator, PUH; Cardiac Physiologist PUH, Claire McDermott, Valerie Teehan, and Andrea Cooke; Ann Donohue, Physiologist, PUH; Dr Chris McBrearty, Quality Improvement Lead, PUH; and Siobhan Woods, Primary Care Development Officer for Galway and Roscommon.

PRECISE Study – Antibody Test for COVID-19

In October, a national study was launched to look at the prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies in healthcare workers in two hospitals - University Hospital Galway and St James's Hospital Dublin. Staff currently working in these two hospitals were invited to have a blood test to determine the presence of COVID-19 antibodies. In UHG, 65% of staff participated in the study. Results have now been issued to all participants.

Results: UHG 4% of all participants had detectable COVID-19 antibodies. 7% of those who had daily contact with known or suspected cases of COVID-19 had detectable antibodies.

Members of the PRECISE Study Team and staff from the Infectious Diseases Department at UHG, from left: Darren Gee, Medical Student; Dr Catherine Fleming, Consultant in Infectious Diseases and PRECISE Site Lead; Claire Heavin, PRECISE Project Manager; Peadar Rooney, PRECISE Data Manager; Nicola Boyle, Clinical Nurse Specialist; and Dr Mary Okon, SHO in Infectious Diseases.



Cardiac Rehab MUH



Cardiac Rehab staff nurses Mairéad McCormack and Anne Marie O'Brien in Mayo University Hospital multitasking at work, putting up Christmas decorations and preparing for the All Ireland Final.

OTs go green



The occupational therapy department in Galway University Hospitals decided to 'go green' in August 2019 when they switched over to using rechargeable batteries. The team started with just 12 rechargeable batteries and in the space of 16 months have saved 76 disposable batteries from going into the bin!

Sligo University Hospital Awarded An Taisce Green Flag



Patricia Lee, Services Manager, Sligo University Hospital with Michael O'Brien, Energy Officer, HSE Estates

Sligo University Hospital has been awarded the prestigious 'Green Flag' and becomes the second hospital in the country to attain the award from An Taisce and the Foundation of Environmental Education (FEE).

The internationally recognised 'Green Flag' was awarded following a rigorous assessment process and recognises the commitment of hospital management and staff, HSE Estates, the NUI Galway Medical Academy and the hospital's Green Campus Committee in developing the hospital as a healthcare facility that delivers high quality care, improved

public health and wellbeing in an environmentally responsible and sustainable way.

The hospital applied to join An Taisce Green Campus Programme in December 2016. The 'Green Flag' award is the result of 4 years of improvements in environmental management which reduced energy and waste and increased recycling levels.



Shane Campbell, HSE Estate Manager North West with Georgina Kilcoyne, Assistant General Manager, Sligo University Hospital.

New COVID-19 Laboratory Testing Equipment for GUH



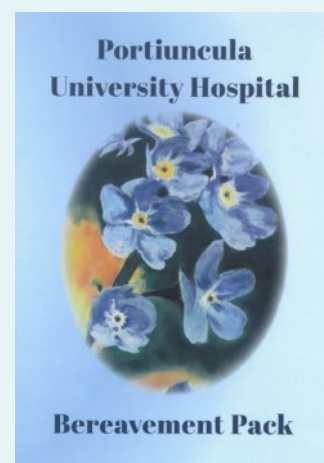
The laboratory at Galway University Hospitals has begun COVID-19 testing using a new high-throughput molecular PCR machine. The new equipment will enable the laboratory to process up to 500 swabs from patients per day, with a turnaround of approximately 3 hours per batch. Until now the laboratory was carrying out COVID-19 batch testing on two separate machines with a turnaround of up to 10 hours and a maximum of 300 tests per day. For more click [here](#).

New Bereavement Information Pack at PUH

The End of Life Care Committee in Portiuncula University Hospital has launched a new Bereavement Information Pack for bereaved families.

Many people have experienced and will experience the death of someone they love during the COVID-19 pandemic. It may have been a COVID-related death or a death from other causes. Within the current restrictions our traditional ways of marking grief has changed, meaning that many people are facing their grief alone. As part of this initiative, a link person on each ward will send the Bereavement Information Pack along with a Sympathy Card within two weeks of the patient's death to the family.

This initiative was a collaborative effort from staff across a number of different disciplines.



Newly refurbished wards re-open at MUH



In November Mayo University Hospital re-opened the newly refurbished wards and patients moved back to the refurbished areas.

The refurbishment was carried out in two phases to ensure minimal impact on the hospital. Phase one involved the refurbishment of wards which include 66 inpatient beds. For more [click here](#).

Emergency Surgery at LUH

A report focusing on research carried out at Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH) as part of the Emergency Surgery Outcomes Advancement Project (eSOAP) was launched in November.

The eSOAP research programme aims to improve the treatment and care of patients requiring emergency surgery.

eSOAP forms part of the €8.6m EU funded cross-border Centre for Personalised Medicine aimed at improving clinical decision making and patient safety for dementia, diabetes, cardiovascular, acute kidney injury and emergency surgery.

The project is supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). For more [click here](#).



Dr Randal Parlour, Director of Research in the emergency surgery programme.

Celebrating National Children's Day at PUH

National Children's Day in Ireland is celebrated on November 20th every year, to commemorate the Declaration of the Rights of The Child by the UN General Assembly on 20th November 1959.

A day for children, by children, all over the world to help save children's lives, fight for their rights and help them fulfil their potential. Childhood should always be something to celebrate!

This celebration offers each of us an inspirational entry-point to advocate, promote and celebrate children's rights, translating into dialogues and actions that will build a better world for children.

In keeping with the flagship "Child talks" event in Dublin City Hall, Portlincula University Hospital invited children to tell their story about "What COVID-19 means to them". They demonstrated their feelings very well through pictures. Local school children painted pictures, their story was the focus of the story board.



Siobhan Horkan, Group Director of Paediatric Nursing, acknowledged and celebrated efforts made by children and staff to mark this special day.

Schwartz Rounds Update

With the arrival of COVID-19 to our shores, all our usual staff social interactions ceased. Now more than ever we need to support each other and create opportunities for us, as a hospital community, to share the lived experience of delivering compassionate healthcare during a global pandemic. However, large gatherings of staff are no longer possible and with that has come the suspension of our regular face-to-face Schwartz Rounds.

Schwartz Rounds are a one hour gathering where all staff, clinical and non-clinical, come together to have a facilitated discussion about the emotional and social aspects of working in healthcare. The purpose of Rounds is to share and reflect on our experiences of providing care, not to problem-solve or to focus on the clinical aspects of patient care. Our Schwartz Rounds team was acutely aware of the need for staff to be able to connect, share experiences and have feelings acknowledged and normalised in such challenging times. But questions arose. Would there be any interest among staff? Would staff have time for a reflective space in the midst of a crisis? Would an online forum work for Rounds? How would we fit this in at a time when staff were required to create new ways of working, learn new skills, and change roles in record time, on top of worries, anxieties and fears brought about by a pandemic?

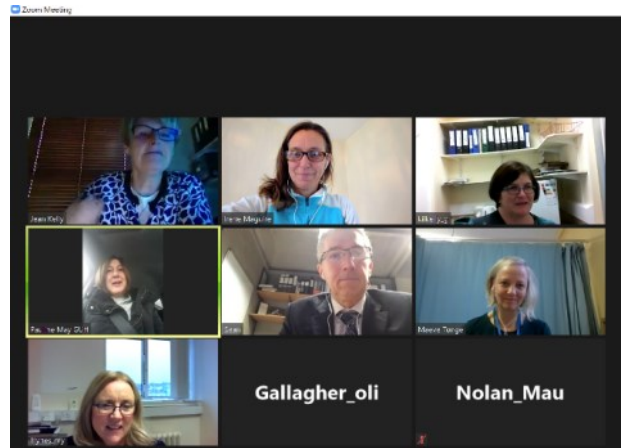
We explored potential options and were delighted to learn about Team Time, a new initiative being rolled out by the Point of Care Foundation with whom we had completed our Schwartz Rounds training. Team Time, like Schwartz Rounds, is a space for clinical and non-clinical staff to reflect on the lived experience of working in a hospital, but is targeted towards a multidisciplinary team who work together on a regular basis, rather than the whole organisation, as in Schwartz Rounds. Team Time is delivered virtually rather than face-to-face.

A number of our Schwartz Rounds facilitators and Clinical leads completed Team Time training and we have run 4 Team Time sessions over the past 8 months for a variety

teams in the hospital. Having had a positive experience with these sessions with the successful translation of the reflective space to an online forum, we are now planning to embark on a new journey of online Schwartz Rounds until such time as we are in a position to have the option once again of in-person Rounds. We are also exploring the option of continuing to run occasional Team Time sessions for teams alongside Rounds.

We are delighted to welcome new members to our Schwartz Rounds team, all of whom have recently completed their training. Our new facilitators are Pauline May, Organ Donation Nurse Manager for Saolta Hospital Group, Maeve Tonge, Senior Medical Social Worker, Women and Children's team and Mary Hynes, HR Manager for GUH. Our new Clinical Lead is Olive Gallagher, Director of Nursing at Cancer, Managed Clinical Academic Network, Saolta, and our new administrator is Maureen Nolan, HR Department. We would also like to thank our General Manager, Chris Kane for her ongoing support of Schwartz Rounds in GUH.

We look forward to commencing online Schwartz Rounds which will be run via Zoom and which staff will be able to book through Eventbrite.



E-learning Programme on Waiting List Management

A new e-learning programme on managing waiting lists is now available on hseland.ie.



The HSE | DPP Protocol | 2020 Training Support Programme for Acute Operations Scheduled Care is a 40 minute e-learning programme on how to update and generally manage the waiting lists for inpatient, and day case patients.

The programme developed by the HSE and NTPF is for all staff working in scheduled care in Acute Hospitals including administration and business support staff as well as clinical and nursing staff. It could easily be included as part of staff induction in scheduled care.

To access the course please go to hseland.ie – the course is available under the course headings Clinical Skills and Health & Social Care Professionals.

Living Well With and Beyond Cancer Conference 2020



Edele Barret, Oncology Dietitian, UHG and Ruth Kilcawley, Senior Oncology Dietitian, UHG doing a cooking demonstration as part of the 'Living Well With and Beyond Cancer Conference 2020'. To view the video [click here](#).

UHG Offers Breastfeeding Education by Webinar

The Maternity Department at University Hospital Galway has redesigned its breastfeeding support service to connect with women virtually instead of face-to-face antenatal workshops and drop-in clinics.

Carmel Connolly, Clinical Nurse Manager 2, Parent Education Services explains, "Breastfeeding is natural but it is a skill that has to be learned and support is crucial when learning new skills. Many women find it very helpful to attend a breastfeeding support group before giving birth, to talk to other mothers, ask questions and meet breastfeeding experts. We have introduced a breastfeeding webinar to provide that same support and to empower, build confidence, troubleshoot, educate and reduce the social isolation some expectant mothers feel."

The webinars are free and women can register to take part by going to www.uhgmaternity.com. [Click here](#) for more.



UHG Multidisciplinary Breastfeeding Support Group from left, Clare Cellarius, Breast Feeding/Lactation Specialist Midwife; Mary Moran, Registered Midwife; Dr Johannes Buca Letshwiti, Consultant Neonatologist and Carmel Connolly, CNM2, Parent Education Services.

Research and Education Foundation Conference at SUH

The Research and Education Foundation at Sligo University Hospital held its 21st annual Multidisciplinary Research Conference on 27 November with local, national and international speakers including Dr Mike Ryan, Executive Director at the WHO.

The conference was aimed at clinical and allied health professionals, third level institution staff and the healthcare industry and was streamed live to almost 1500 participants.

Commenting, Professor Nash Patil, Consultant Surgeon at Sligo University Hospital and Board member of the REF said, "The focus of this year's conference was the COVID-19 pandemic – the experiences, responses and learning from the clinical / scientific / industry / community perspectives.

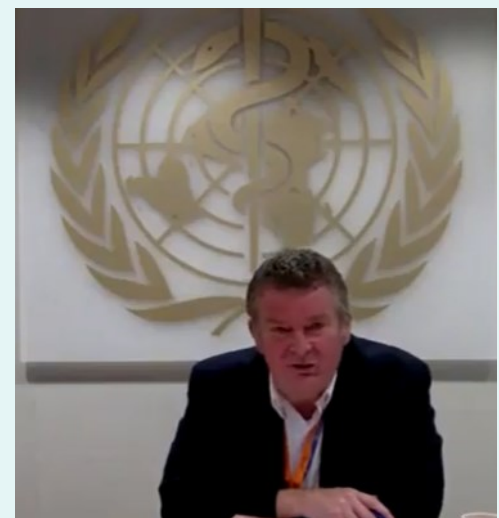
"The conference was an all-day event run from IT Sligo and streamed to venues in Sligo University Hospital with a mix of remote and proximate presentations.

"We were delighted to have an excellent line-up of speakers who shared their experiences and perspective with us. In particular, we were delighted that Dr Mike Ryan of the WHO joined us to talk of his role in the international response to the management of COVID-19.

"It was a real privilege for us here in Sligo to have an opportunity to learn from him. Other speakers included Professor Luke O'Neill, Trinity College Dublin; Dr Francois Roman, Senior Developer – Clinical Vaccines at GSK Biologicals, Belgium; Dr Anthony Breslin, HSE Director of Public Health in the North West and Prof Molly Byrne, Director, Health Behaviour Change Research Group, School of Psychology, NUI Galway."



From Left: Dr Katherine Finnan, Respiratory Consultant; Professor Nash Patil, Consultant Surgeon at SUH and Board member of the REF and Grainne McCann, General Manager.



Dr Mike Ryan speaking at the Conference.

COVID-19 Physiotherapy Team - Clinical Research

In Galway University Hospitals, a COVID-19 specific Physiotherapy team assesses and rehabilitates patients with COVID-19 on the COVID-19 wards, in the Intensive Care Unit and also in the outpatient post COVID-19 Clinic.

Part of the team's role is participation in clinical research and improving evidence-based patient care. As a result of COVID-19, it is thought that breathing (inspiratory) muscles can become weak. There has been limited research conducted to date with regards to the effects of COVID-19 on inspiratory muscles. Inspiratory muscle weakness has been shown to result in decreased exercise tolerance, fatigue and dyspnoea while also increasing the risk of developing respiratory infections. Inspiratory muscle training has been used by Physiotherapists in the management and rehabilitation of COPD, asthma, neuromuscular diseases, and in the ICU setting to aid with weaning from the ventilator.



As a result of the lack of

Stock image of patient using an Inspiratory Muscle Training Device.

evidence in this particular area, the COVID-19 Physiotherapy team are currently completing a clinical trial in the post COVID-19 clinic, to assess and treat breathing muscle weakness. Patients with weak breathing muscles are enrolled in the research study which involves using a piece of equipment which aims to improve the strength of breathing muscles over a twelve week period. Data collection is ongoing and the interim results to date are extremely promising to support the use of this Physiotherapy adjunct.



L:R Kevin O'Connell, Senior Physiotherapist; Ciara Dolan, Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist – NIV; Aoife Burke, Staff Physiotherapist and Trudy Kelliher, Senior Physiotherapist.

Pharmacy Team at LUH advise 'Know, Check, Ask'

In December the Pharmacy team in Letterkenny University Hospital are reminding the public to 'Know, Check, Ask' when it comes to managing their medication:

- Know your medicines and keep a list, bringing it to appointments and if admitted to hospital
- Check that you are using the right medicine the right way
- Ask your healthcare professional if you're unsure

For more [click here](#).



Safe Medication Practice Recognition in UHG



Certificates of Recognition were allocated to wards in UHG to recognise the high standards and commitment of Safe Medication Practice.

Paediatrics 1st place at 90.8%.

St. Joseph's ward 2nd place at 88.5%.

St. Pius ward (88.1%) and Claddagh (88%) were jointly allocated 3rd place.

RUH appoints First Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Respiratory Care

Noreen Fallon, a Roscommon native, has recently been appointed as a Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner (RANP) in Respiratory Care at Roscommon University Hospital. Noreen is the first RANP specialising in Respiratory Care at Roscommon University Hospital. RANPs are the highest level of clinical experts in the nursing profession in Ireland today.

Noreen qualified from NUI Galway as a Registered General Nurse in 1995 and has 25 years of nursing experience. After completing her General Nurse training in GUH, she went on to work in University Hospital Galway, the Mater Misericordiae in Dublin, Merlin Park University Hospital, Hammersmith Hospital in London and at a Military Hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She joined Roscommon University Hospital in 2004 and has always had an interest in respiratory care throughout her career. For more [click here](#).



Noreen Fallon, Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Respiratory Care.

Awake Proning for COVID-19 Patients

Dr Bairbre McNicholas, Consultant Intensivist and Nephrologist, GUH and Mr Kevin O'Connell, Senior Physiotherapist, GUH recently completed a presentation at the Irish Gerontological Society Scientific Meeting – Translating Critical Care Learning on COVID-19 outside of the ICU. Their presentation outlined their experience of awake proning in COVID-19 patients within GUH. Kevin outlined a fascinating case study of an elderly gentleman in which a Physiotherapy-led awake proning programme had a profoundly beneficial effect at ward level.

Professor John Laffey and Dr Bairbre McNicholas are site leads at GUH for the APPROVE-CARE Clinical Trial. This study is a multi-centre randomised controlled trial investigating the effects of "Awake Prone Positioning to Reduce Invasive Ventilation in COVID-19 Induced Acute Respiratory failure" (APPROVE-CARE). To date 840 patients have been randomised to this trial across a number of countries (Ireland, US, Canada, Mexico, France, Spain). This trial is important in providing the evidence base required to show the effectiveness of awake proning amongst COVID-19 patients.



Dr Bairbre McNicholas



Mr Kevin O'Connell

Virtual Orthopaedic Clinic at MPUH

A new virtual orthopaedic clinic in Merlin Park University Hospital saw 1000 patients within the first 10 weeks of operation and had reached 1600 patients earlier this month.

49 % of patients are managed without needing an in-person clinic appointment with orthopaedics saving just under 800 in-person clinic appointments. For more details click [here](#).

From left: Mr Fintan Shannon, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon; Mr Odhrán Murray, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon and Virtual Clinic Lead; Peter O'Reilly, Evolve Developer, IS Department; Sharon O'Connor, Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist; Mary Fanning; and Fionnuala Heverin.



Significant hospital-wide recruitment at LUH

This month Letterkenny University Hospital commenced the largest recruitment campaign in the hospital's history, with positions available across nursing specialties, midwifery, consultant and non-consultant hospital doctor specialties, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. There are also opportunities for Health Care Assistants and administration and support staff.

Over the coming months LUH will recruit up to 120 posts, of which in the region of 100 are new posts, across a wide number of departments to support existing services and enable the development of new services. The hospital has undergone huge infrastructural redevelopment over the last number of years with state of the art facilities across many services including radiology and laboratory. Staff at the hospital describe their experiences working in LUH.

Deirdre Diver, Advanced Nurse Practitioner in the Endoscopy Unit at LUH said, "Over these years I have had excellent educational support from Letterkenny University Hospital. As a Nurse Endoscopist, I carry out gastroscopies and colonoscopies and participate in the multidisciplinary team. As a teaching hospital, Letterkenny University Hospital promotes a culture of education, innovation, and growth."

Dr Elisma Wilken, Consultant Respiratory Physician at Letterkenny University Hospital added, "I have been working as a medical consultant here in LUH for the last year having travelled from Cape Town in South Africa with my family. I work as a Respiratory Physician and General Physician alongside 12 other colleagues in General Medicine. The Department and all of the staff in the hospital are very supportive and everyone is very friendly. It is a really good environment to raise your family while developing your career."

Natasha Mooney, Staff Midwife Letterkenny University Hospital said, "I have been working as a Midwife in LUH for seven years. We have a great unit here; we have a brilliant team of doctors and midwives and a really good multi-disciplinary team. We have approximately 1700 deliveries per year and have both consultant-led and midwifery-led units. There are great opportunities to develop as a Midwife here in LUH and Letterkenny itself is a really great town."



Deirdre Diver, Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Endoscopy.

Click [here](#) for video



Dr Elisma Wilken, Consultant Respiratory Physician.

Click [here](#) for video



Natasha Mooney, Staff Midwife, Maternity Unit.

Click [here](#) for video

GUH celebrates European Antibiotic Awareness Day

European Antibiotic Awareness Day (EAAD) takes place each year across Europe on 18 November to promote the importance of prudent antibiotic use. EAAD coincides with the World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW), held from 18-24 November, which aims to increase awareness of global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and encourage best practices among the general public, healthcare providers, and policy makers to avoid further emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections. The theme this year was "In times of COVID-19, don't give up on AMR and stay united to preserve antimicrobials".

One of the key objectives is to improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education, and training. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, GUH celebrated EAAD and WAAW successfully this year. 200 members of the public and staff participated in antibiotic awareness quizzes with four prize winners; slide and video presentations, and a social media campaign.



L:R Katie McDonough, Antimicrobial Pharmacist; Dr Una Ni Riain, Consultant Microbiologist; Diana Hogan-Murphy, Antimicrobial Pharmacist and Reebcca Breslin, Antimicrobial Pharmacist.



#OurPeople



Name: John Crosby

Job Title: Senior Pathology Technician

Location: Portiuncula University Hospital

How did you get interested in the role of Senior Anatomical Pathology Technician?

An interest in human biology, anatomy and physiology lead me to apply for a vacancy that arose for a trainee Anatomical Pathology Technician position. I gained an introduction to the Coroners system and postmortem techniques. Tutorial demonstrations followed under the supervision of the Senior Anatomical Pathology Technician, in conjunction with a Consultant Histopathologist and Forensic Pathologist. I then furthered my studies and obtained the Diploma in Anatomical Pathology Technology from The Royal Institute Of Public Health and Hygiene.

What is a typical day?

A typical day in Portiuncula University Hospital Mortuary involves mortuary administration, receiving a deceased patient into the Mortuary, liaising with medical teams and the Divisional Nurse managers. I also liaise with Consultant Pathologists, the Coroner, Gardaí, the pastoral care team, bereavement support midwives, funeral directors, embalmers, relatives of a deceased,

and members of the public with their inquiries. In addition, I arrange Coroners' identifications and schedule postmortems. I perform the postmortem evisceration and assist the Consultant Pathologist during the postmortem examination. I facilitate the viewing and release of the deceased to the appointed Funeral Director. I transfer various specimens to the laboratory for further analysis. I also maintain the mortuary complex, postmortem theatre, equipment and order consumables and supplies.

If you had to describe your job in three words... or a sentence... what would it be?

Unpredictable, challenging and rewarding.

Most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of the job is knowing that you have taken care of someone's loved one and helped and supported their family with their loss, in a caring and sensitive manner. I have had and continue to have the good fortune to work alongside some wonderful pathologists. I have enjoyed their interesting and stimulating tutorials and very thought-provoking discussions on all aspects of life and death.

Being part of the Portiuncula 'family' has been very rewarding. The friendly, dedicated and caring staff, together with the support of the pastoral care team and management make it a lovely place to work. The redevelopment of the Mortuary complex, to a high standard which is fit for purpose is a pleasure for all staff to work in. I would like to say a special thank you to all those involved in the Mortuary renovation works.

Saolta partners with the WHO to deliver Public Lecture on Digital Health

A public lecture on Digital Health with Prof Derek O'Keeffe, Consultant Physician at University Hospital Galway and Mr Bernardo Mariano Jr, WHO Chief Information Officer is now available to view at: <https://youtu.be/h9JvfPDR198>

For more click [here](#).



Supporting the UNICEF 'Get a Vaccine, Give a Vaccine' Campaign



Staff from across the Saolta Group are once again supporting the UNICEF 'Get a Vaccine, Give a Vaccine' campaign by getting their flu vaccination. For every member of staff who gets a flu vaccine, the Hospital Group will donate 10 polio vaccines to UNICEF.

This is the fourth year that staff have been supporting UNICEF in this way and last year 45,500 vaccines were donated on behalf of staff.

Joe Canning, UNICEF Ambassador and Galway Senior Hurler launched the campaign and in a video to staff said, "I am thrilled to say that Saolta University Health Care Group is once again working with UNICEF this year. It means that every time a member of staff gets their free flu vaccine, Saolta will contribute to the vaccination of five children against polio."

"On behalf of UNICEF I want to thank Saolta for partnering on vaccinations for the world's most vulnerable children."

Paul Hooton, Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery for the Saolta University Health Care Group said, "There is a greater emphasis than ever on the need for as many hospital staff to get the vaccine as possible. In these uncertain times, knowing that we are able to protect our staff, our patients and our families by getting the vaccine ourselves, is a great comfort."

"There has been unprecedented demand for the flu vaccine nationally and we are very fortunate that the national immunisation office is prioritising the vaccine for those aged over 65 and healthcare workers and we have access to a supply of vaccine for at least 75% of all staff."

"It is also important that we are able to help UNICEF in their efforts to vaccinate children for polio, a preventable disease that has been eradicated in most countries. The uptake for the flu vaccine from staff has been higher than in any other year and I look forward to being able to donate an even greater number of vaccines on behalf of staff."



Click [here](#) to view the full video

EAPandME

Employee Assistance Programme

Many of us experience stresses and strains in our work and personal lives and might be wondering if there is anyone there to help.



EAP is a free, confidential counselling service, here to help you. EAP also offers support following a critical incident affecting you or your team.

Call **0818 327 327**
to speak to someone who can help.

 #EAPandME

Go to www.hse.ie/EAPandME to access
our online hub of helpful resources





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