

MS Ireland and UL have successfully collaborated on significant research projects with ground breaking and positive results for people with MS since 2007. A key project was 'The Getting the Balance Right' programme, designed to evaluate the effect of a range of physiotherapy and exercise based interventions for people with MS with varying mobility levels. The results demonstrated a number of optimal interventions which are now being adopted across the public and private sectors in Ireland as best practice.

Anne Winslow, Chief Executive of MS Ireland believes that the collaboration between the two organisations demonstrates leading edge innovation, "We are delighted to form this new memorandum of understanding with the University of Limerick as we truly believe that the best way to manage MS is to understand it better. The research projects and the sharing of information will deepen our knowledge of MS and help those living with MS or working with people who do, to adopt strategies that reduce or eliminate the challenges often associated with living with MS."

Speaking from the signing event today at UL, Professor Don Barry, UL President, said that as well as enhancing significant research activities the agreement will compliment the ethos of knowledge sharing between the two organisations. "Knowledge sharing activities have been underway for some time between MS Ireland and UL involving academics and postgraduate students delivering lectures to people with MS and professionals in the area. The development of postgraduate programmes and modules to enable specialisation in the management of people with neurological disorders is a key priority for MS Ireland and UL can play an important role in developing programme structures and content to meet this need."

It is envisaged that new research projects will cover a broad spectrum and have a strong multi-disciplinary approach as a variety of academic departments become involved. MS is often classed as a physical condition as it is often typified by reduced mobility. But for many people with the condition it also affects their everyday living. Coping with invisible symptoms, accessing buildings, using and finding equipment, remaining in work, socialising, coping with a diagnosis, relationships and participating in society can be affected significantly by MS. It is hoped that the collaboration will help people living with MS manage their everyday lives better.

World MS Day takes place on Wednesday May 25th and aims to create awareness of MS and the supports, services and developments that help people with MS meet the challenges MS can bring to their life and the lives of their family. World MS Day activities begin with the launch of the memorandum of understanding with University of Limerick and go on to include the publication of a new series of information booklets and the launch of a new fundraising campaign to raise funds for local services and the MS Care Centre, Ireland's only respite and therapy centres for people with MS. The first Friends of the MS Care Centre fundraising event takes place on Friday May 27th at the Four Seasons Hotel, Dublin.

More than 8,000 people have MS in Ireland, with thousands more family members affected. Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic, often disabling disease and is the most common disabling neurological condition affecting young people in Ireland. MS can be a physically disabling condition but it can also affect the social, financial and emotional wellbeing of the person with MS. MS Fact File

- There is an estimated 8,000 people with MS in Ireland
- 54% of Irish people with MS leave employment due to their MS
- Although MS can be physically disabling, most people experience mild disability and can remain active with minimal supports
- Research has shown that people with MS can expect to receive 3 hours of physiotherapy in a three month period
- MS is usually diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40, when most people are planning careers and families
- Family carers offer significant support to those most disabled by their MS. 67% of carers of people with MS provide care on their own, 76% of carers were providing care for a spouse or partner, 51% of carers provide care for over 45 hours a week.