



Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the spring edition of our GP Newsletter.

It will come as no surprise for you to hear that it has been an extremely busy start to the year here at Tallaght University Hospital (TUH) with a record number of patients presenting at our Emergency Department. In addition to this, many of the patients arriving at ED have a higher acuity, placing additional demands on our services. Overall we have recorded a 41% increase in unscheduled care in recent weeks, while our occupancy rate continues to run in the range of 101 to 113%.

There are a variety of reasons for this. You will of course be aware that while COVID numbers have reduced, the virus is still very much present in society and the Hospital. Poor access to the necessary support services in the community like home help and nursing home places is a significant factor in the high numbers of our patients that face a delay in their discharge.

On a positive note, as you might be aware we have clinical governance over 40 beds in the Tymon North Community Unit. Recruitment is currently ongoing to hire staff to enable us to open a further eight beds, in the nursing home. We hope this will happen in the next two months.

In other good news, despite the unscheduled activity, the waiting list position of the hospital is favourable. Patients waiting longer than 12 months on three waiting lists are falling. We are also delighted the new Pathfinder system has been rolled out in our area. Now when an older person (65+) calls 999 the call can be screened and where appropriate they can be assessed by an advanced paramedic and an occupational therapist or physiotherapist in their own home. You can read more about this new service in the newsletter.

We are grateful for your continued support as we all try to deal with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to continuing to build on our strong working relationships with you so that together we can improve services for all of our patients.

Warm regards,

Lucy Nugent
CEO
Tallaght University Hospital

New Pathfinder Service to benefit older people in Tallaght

A new National Ambulance Service (NAS) led service called Pathfinder has been rolled out in our locality. It is designed to safely keep older people who phone 112/999 in their own homes rather than taking them to the Emergency Department (ED).

Now when an older person calls 999/112 they are assessed by both an advanced paramedic and an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist. An ECG can be carried out in the person's home as well as a medication check. Where safe, the team supports the older person at home rather than taking them to ED, by linking with a wide range of alternative hospital and community services. Pathfinder also operates a 'Follow-Up Team' (Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy) which provides immediate home-based rehabilitation and equipment provision.

On average two thirds of patients seen by Pathfinder following a 999 call have remained at home rather than being brought to the Emergency Department. NAS Pathfinder is improving outcomes for older people by minimising unnecessary ED attendances and offering safe alternative care pathways for older people in their own homes rather than in the hospital.

Pathfinder aims to reduce congestion in busy EDs and makes for a better environment for patients and staff on the floor whilst improving overall flow through the ED. The service enables increased ED capacity to care for other patients, by supporting this cohort of complex, frail patients at home.



Recruitment of Volunteers

The Hospital is appealing to anyone with four hours of free time to consider becoming a volunteer.

Carol Mullins, the Volunteer Manager at TUH says the service plays an important role, "in helping patients and has been integral to the hospital since 1998 when we first opened our doors."

Talking to us about why she volunteers in TUH, volunteer Marie Barnes says "I enjoy volunteering and I love being part of the team here at the Hospital and giving back to my community. I get more from volunteering than I give."

When the hospital first opened in the late nineties, volunteers showed patients coming in, where to find their clinic. They also helped family members to find a ward to visit a loved one. Today the Meet, Greet and Guide Volunteers also support patients as they check in with the Self Registration Out-patient Kiosks. These special machines print out detailed directions on how to find a particular clinic. Combined with the support from volunteers this ensures patients can easily find their appointment.

As well as the roles described above, volunteers also conduct surveys with patients to get feedback about their hospital experience. This helps TUH continue to improve the care and services it delivers to patients. If you are aware of any patients that are recently retired or have some free time on their hands then perhaps volunteering might be something they are interested in. They can a member of the Patient Advice & Liaison Service on 01 414 4709 or email pals@tuh.ie



Pictured some of our volunteers at their Coffee Shop (L-R) Maria & Marie Barnes and Terry Ward

New Director of Nursing

The Hospital is delighted to welcome Ms. Sandra McCarthy who has returned to the Hospital in the role of Director of Nursing & Integrated Care (interim). Sandra has come from Portlaoise General Hospital where she was Director of Nursing before this Sandra worked as the Head of the Centre for Learning & Development in TUH having completed her Nurse Training in The Meath Hospital.

Her professional portfolio includes an Honours Degree in Nursing from Trinity College Dublin, an MSc in Nursing and a postgraduate qualification in Health Care Education from UCD.



Ms. Sandra McCarthy, Director of Nursing & Integrated Care

New Intensive Care Wing Opens

Late last year the Hospital hosted a visit by Minister of Health Stephen Donnelly TD where he officially opened the Hospital's new 1,750 m² Intensive Care Wing.

The brand-new expanded space on the first floor of the Hospital has 12 ICU beds, each of which is in a single room. The additional beds which provide care to the most critically ill patients are located across two zones, each with its own central nursing station.

Before the new wing opening TUH had nine Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds, five Post Anaesthesia Critical Care Unit (PACCU) beds which managed elective and emergency postoperative patients and two High Dependency Unit (HDU) beds located in the coronary care unit.

The opening of the new ICU extension is part of the hospital's strategy to improve infrastructure to meet the increasing demands of a rapidly growing population. Patients requiring ICU care will now receive it in the appropriate and superior location, ensuring the alternative areas previously used for ICU patients can be used for their proper purpose i.e. post anaesthetic care unit which facilitates complex post-operative patients.

The additional beds are being supported by 146 whole-time equivalent staff made up of nursing, consultant intensivists, registrars and Health & Social Care Professionals. Refurbishment completed in the existing ICU in TUH which means the additional bed capacity will increase steadily from 12 to 21 beds from January onwards upon completion of the refurbishment programme.

This expansion comes at an ideal time given TUH's recent designation as a Trauma Unit. This expansion will also help with the increase in the ICU workload now that Naas General Hospital has been deemed a trauma bypass.



Pictured during his recent visit to TUH Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD with Lucy Nugent, Chief Executive, Lisa Dunne, CNM3 ICU, Professor Peter Lavin and Dr. Maria Donnelly

Laboratory Medicine Innovation Hub Secures Funding

Congratulations to the Laboratory Medicine Innovation Hub (LMIH) which received confirmation of €27k of funding through the competitive Spark Community Innovation Fund.



Pictured from left to right at the announcement of the funding being secured were Professor Gerard Boran, Consultant Chemical Pathologist; Dr. Ann Leonard, Quality Innovation Manager; Ms. Catriona Duffy, Senior Medical Scientist; Mr. Ciaran Love, Laboratory Manager and Dr. Hannah O Keefe, Innovation Fellow. Absent from the picture is Ms. Caroline Murray, Senior Medical Scientist

The team at LMIH are passionate about improving pre-analytics and sample quality by targeting the early stages of sampling and processing. Samples taken in the community frequently have a significant lag time before being processed in the Hospital due to transport and other delays. If samples are not centrifuged (a process during which the sample is spun at high speed to separate fluids of different densities) two to four hours after being taken then potassium levels can be falsely elevated, resulting in both under-diagnosis of low potassium and over diagnosis of high potassium. A high potassium level is regarded as a medical emergency and a falsely elevated result can trigger unnecessary hospital or ED visits for patients.

The LMIH are planning to disrupt the current process by piloting the use of centrifuges at the point of sampling in GP practices. This project 'Centrifugation At Source' will stabilise samples before they start their journey to the hospital. This will mean a reduced risk of pseudohyperkalemia (false high potassium) and improve the accuracy of results. This project will be led by Catriona Duffy and Ann Leonard with guidance and support from Professor Boran.

Showcase of Chronic Pancreatitis App

TUH runs the biggest centre for chronic pancreatitis care on the Island of Ireland and currently has more than 300 patients on their clinical database. Many live outside of Dublin.

Recently the interdisciplinary Chronic Pancreatitis team showcased an innovative mobile phone app, termed the SmartCP app. This app empowers patients to take control of their condition and report symptoms to improve the flow of communication with their medical team. The app will streamline and coordinate patient management, and will enable TUH to care for patients in their homes and communities, aligning with TUH's vision of being 'a hospital without walls'.



Pictured from left to right at the first showcase of the new innovative mobile phone app, termed the SmartCP app the TUH team including Ms. Marie Egan, Clinical Nurse Specialist; Mr. Aidan McGrenra, Patient Representative; Dr. Sinead Duggan, Senior Research Fellow in TDC; Professor Kevin Conlon; Consultant Surgeon at TUH & Professor of Surgery at TCD; Ms Carol Stephens, Senior Dietitian in Upper GI/ Pancreatic Disease and Mr. Anant Paul, Specialist Registrar

There are several types of outpatient clinics for chronic pancreatitis per week, including a Clinical Nurse Specialist led clinic and a specialist type 3c diabetes clinic. TUH research has shown that Ireland has among the highest numbers in Europe of those suffering from chronic pancreatitis.

The new chronic pancreatitis app was developed in collaboration with TUH's Innovate Health Team, ICT & Finance Departments, as well as, the Dept of Computing at the Technological University Dublin. Patients with chronic pancreatitis have also been central to its design and development. In tandem with this project, the group at TUH set up the first Patient Support and Advocacy Group for chronic pancreatitis in the country, which is called Chronic Pancreatitis Ireland.

The SmartCP project was supported by an innovation grant from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform.

Setting the Scene

The Academic Primary Care Collaborative at Tallaght (APCC) builds on the co-location of the Trinity College School of Medicine's Discipline of Public Health & Primary Care, Tallaght Cross General Practice, and HSE primary care services in the Russell Centre; along with TUH, the expanding range of health and related services in this area, and engagement with community-based groups and projects in the Tallaght area. The APCC facilitates innovative service delivery, advocacy, research and education for health and wellbeing in Tallaght.

The vision is for the APCC is to contribute to a future in which:

Tallaght is a community where no one is left behind and everyone shares good health.

Alongside the local benefits of ***innovating community health*** in this way, research outputs will generate evidence to support similar initiatives in other communities and to inform policy in supporting such innovation.

The action areas of the APCC are: Service Needs, Advocacy, Research, and Education. The APCC Steering Group and annual work plan is structured to align with and drive these four action areas.

The ethos of the APCC is one of impactful collaboration and inclusivity. Participation is welcome and encouraged from across the Tallaght community, Trinity College, Tallaght University Hospital and the HSE.

Current APCC projects include an exploration of service needs, an evaluation of the CH07 ExWell Programme and a range of education and public outreach activities. The APCC co-hosts a series of public lectures with its community partner, An Cosán. The next event is scheduled for June 22nd with Dr Sumi Dunne talking about Menopause and Health. A more in-depth exploration of the work of the APCC will be provided in future editions.

Taoiseach attends event hosted by the Tallaght University Hospital Foundation

The TUH Foundation (TUHF) hosted a special evening in the Museum of Modern Literature last October, bringing Ireland's foremost business leaders, policymakers and health innovators together to mark Innovate Health's first year in establishing and growing Tallaght University Hospital's 'Innovation Model'.

Introducing Innovate Health's newly established brand, TUHF showcased their ambition to deliver a world-class innovation centre where healthcare professionals, designers, medical device manufacturers and engineers will work in close collaboration with a core focus on Brain Health, Aging Well, Chronic Disease and Digital Technology.

Speaking at the event, special guest, at the time Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment Leo Varadkar TD praised the ambition of TUH and the innovation team, recognising the value of Innovate Health's vision and the importance of innovation projects being managed and evaluated in a real-world setting of a model 4 hospital.

A progressive, collaborative, and trusted innovation partner, Prof Seán Kennelly, spoke about the Brain Health Clinic which is already leading the way in Europe.

For more information go to www.innovatehealthtuh.ie or email Natalie at Natalie.Cole@tuh.ie



Pictured from left to right at the celebration of Innovate Health's first year were Dr. Natalie Cole, Head of Innovation; Douglas Collins, Chief Executive of TUFH; Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment, Leo Varadkar TD; Lucy Nugent, Chief Executive of TUH and Professor Seán Kennelly, Consultant Physician in Geriatric & Stroke Medicine and, Director of the TUH Institute of Memory & Cognition

International Appointment for CEO of TUH

The European Association of Hospital Managers (EAHM) has elected Lucy Nugent, Chief Executive of TUH as President. The EAHM is the umbrella association for 19 leading hospital management associations in 18 European countries representing over 16,000 individual members from across Europe, Ms Nugent is the first female in the organisation's 52-year history.

Commenting on her appointment Mr. Liam Dowdall, Chairman of the TUH Board said "The Board of TUH would like to congratulate Lucy on this appointment and wish her every success in her tenure as President. Lucy leads an exceptional team in this Hospital but incredibly, still makes time to give something back to the wider health community."



Chairman of the TUH Board Mr. Liam Dowdall with Chief Executive of TUH and President of the EAHM Lucy Nugent

TUH leads the way by appointing first permanent psychologist to ICU



Dr. Melanie Ryberg has recently been appointed as the Principal Clinical Psychologist in Critical Care at TUH. She is the first permanent Clinical Psychologist ever appointed to a full-time role in ICU in the Republic of Ireland.

It is Melanie's role to identify and meet the psychological needs of patients and their families during an ICU admission.

In terms of innovation, Melanie's focus has been on helping the large proportion of patients in the ICU who suffer from delirium (up to 80%), a condition which causes confusion and a lack of awareness of someone's surroundings.

Melanie says, "We know delirium is a significant issue in critical care and is associated with a range of bad outcomes including length of stay, cognitive impairment and mortality."

To improve the care provided to these patients Melanie has introduced a range of what she describes as "orientation and humanisation measures."

These include the use of a 'digital whiteboard' in the ICU to enable clinicians to creatively display key information for patients relevant to the patient's stage of recovery (i.e. basic orientation, information for early stages of wakefulness, simple things such as reminding the patient where they are, what day/date it is).

Melanie also ensures that family photographs are on display to help patients feel comforted and more connected to the important people in their lives between visits, as well as making sure staff are given information to help them understand what matters most to the patient in their care.

In the future, Melanie plans to continue to enhance psychological supports in ICU whether it be for a patient with delirium or someone who may need post-ICU treatment or who may be entering their end of life care.



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

Email: GPConnect@tuh.ie