



Dear Colleagues

It has been an exceptionally busy year in the Hospital, the activity in the ED to date is up 8% on 2023. The historical deficit of inpatient beds the Hospital has faced will be resolved with the new ward blocks in planning but until they are opened the Hospital will continue to operate at

over 100% occupancy most of the time. The Hospital continues to work on improving treatment times in the ED with patient experience times improving by 9% year on year.

We continue to ask for your cooperation in considering all the options for patients when referring them, the community radiology, chronic disease hubs or community chest pain clinics.

At the end of each year I always like to thank everyone for their incredible hard work and reflect on the year that we have had.

This year it is a little different as it is my last Christmas at TUH before my departure to pastures new.

I want to sincerely thank our local GPs and their practice staff for their support for the Hospital and community. I will continue to watch the progress of both the Hospital and community, celebrating the milestones that I know are coming in the future, the long awaited and badly needed bed blocks. I leave knowing that John Kelly will be a steady hand as Interim CEO supported by an excellent management team.

Every best wish for a wonderful Christmas and a healthy & happy 2025 for you and your loved ones.

Best wishes

Lucy Nugent
Chief Executive
Tallaght University Hospital

OPD Modernisation Project – Out-patient Referrals Update

From Monday, January 13th 2025 the Central Referrals Office (CRO) in the Hospital will only accept Outpatient Department referrals from GPs via Healthlink.

The Hospital is making this change to:

- ▶ Improve communication and interaction with patients and GPs.
- ▶ Eliminate ineffective systems and processes.
- ▶ Endeavour to align OPD processes and systems with Patient Clinical Pathway Requirements.
- ▶ Standardise forms/letters/communications/appointments.
- ▶ Move from paper to electronic systems.

An FAQ guide can be downloaded via this [link](#).

Further information is available on the Hospital [website](#).

The following clinics will accept direct referrals via paper/email as an exception to the above.

Service / Clinic Name	How to Refer
Colposcopy	Referrals can be send direct to the Colposcopy Service in TUH. Healthlink referrals are not accepted
Rheumatology – Rapid Access & Giant Cell Arthritis	Send referral directly to the Rheumatology Registrar
TIA RASP Service	Click here for a link to the online referral form

Lunch & Learn

The Tallaght Chronic Disease Hub have scheduled a webinar series for GPs, Practice Nurses and Healthcare professionals. The aim of the series is to build on the understanding of chronic respiratory disease and integrated care models. The one hour sessions will cover updated guidelines, diagnostic methods, treatment strategies and referral pathways to ensure you are current with best practices in respiratory care.

Pulmonary Function Test Interpretation & Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Thursday, January 23rd, 1pm

Speakers: Craig McDonnell, Senior Respiratory Physiologist & Clare Baily Scanlan, Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist

Key Topics: How to interpret pulmonary function test (PFT) results & pulmonary rehabilitation in chronic disease care

Registration: [Click here to register](#)

COPD Management Overview

Thursday, March 20th, 1pm

Speaker: Dr. Deirdre Fitzgerald, Consultant Respiratory Physician

Key Topics:

- ▶ Latest COPD management guidelines
- ▶ Diagnostic approaches for COPD
- ▶ Inhaler choices and treatment strategies
- ▶ Referral guidelines for specialist care

Registration: [Click here to register](#)

Completion of a feedback form at the end of each session to receive ICGP CPD credits.

New Research

Important new research is to be undertaken by a Consultant Neurologist at Tallaght University Hospital (TUH) to find out if blood tests can be used to diagnose Alzheimer's disease in people with Down syndrome. Dr. Antoinette O'Connor hopes this new study will also support future investigation of whether new medications to slow the progress of Alzheimer's could be effective for those with Down syndrome.

This new study is necessary as people with Down syndrome have a significant risk of developing Alzheimer's disease (AD). Recently new drugs have come on stream which have been shown to slow the progression of Alzheimer's for those in the early stages of the disease. The challenge for doctors is to determine if individuals with Down syndrome can also benefit from these treatments.

In order to properly test these treatments, there will need to be carefully designed studies. Traditional tests, cerebrospinal fluid sampling, and brain scans are invasive and expensive, therefore it would be easier for participants if blood tests could be used to detect and track potential treatment effects.

On her study Dr. O'Connor says, "We are entering a new era in AD treatment- for the first time there are therapies that can slow disease progression. Frustratingly, people with Down syndrome have been routinely excluded from AD drug trials, despite urgent clinical need in this population. Therefore, we do not know if these potentially life-altering treatments work in Down syndrome."

The TUH Consultant Neurologist says, "Robust clinical trials involving those with Down syndrome will need to be undertaken to track the changes in them caused by AD. These measures of change are called biomarkers."

Blood tests represent an ideal AD biomarker as they are cheap, accessible and repeatable." The research which will be undertaken at TUH, has been funded by the Health Research Board under their Emerging Clinician Scientist Award.



Consultant Neurologist Dr. Antoinette O'Connor

Women's Health Podcasts

The Hospital has just released a new six part podcast series on Women's Health.

Each individual episode produced as part of the Hospital's Let Talk About series covers a different topic such as; Endometriosis, the Importance of Cervical Screening, Brain Health and Dealing with Brain Fog, Pelvic Prolapse and Incontinence, Good Heart & Bone Health and finally Menopause.

The guests on the podcast include Consultant Gynaecologists Dr. Aoife O'Neil and Dr. Alison DeMaio, Consultant

Endocrinologist Dr. Lucy-Ann Behan, and Advanced Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health Sinead Cleary, Cheryl Gilmore and Colleen Byrne as well as Endometriosis Clinical Nurse Specialist Paula Earley.

They were joined by their colleagues Advanced Nurse Practitioners David Askin (Bone Health) Shirley Ingram (Heart) and Cathy McHale (Brain & Memory). The podcasts also featured Grainne Wall a Specialist Urogynaecology Physiotherapist and the Hospital's Head of Psychology Neuropsychologist, Dr. Valerie Twomey. The podcast project was funded by the South Dublin County Partnerships Health Project (Fettercairn).



You can hear all of the podcasts on the Tallaght University Hospital YouTube channel. They are also available on the Apple Podcasts and Podbean platforms. This is a [link](#) to the series.

Nature's Tapestry - Exhibition of Work by TUH Staff Members

The TUH Arts & Health Programme in collaboration with RUA RED South Dublin Arts Centre are delighted to welcome viewers to 'Nature's Tapestry' an exhibition dedicated to the breath taking landscapes and diverse wildlife of Ireland.

These photographs are created by two great friends, Tommy Walsh and Ray Mullen, both of whom work full time in TUH.

Together they set up a business to share their passion for photography, the great outdoors and Ireland's vivid landscapes, tapestry of lush valleys, rolling hills and coastlines, each telling a story of resilience and tranquillity. The exhibition can be viewed on the Café Wall, in RUA RED South Dublin Arts Centre until January 2025.



Aurora Borealis - Hill of Slane, Ray Mullen

HealthTech Award

Congratulations to our colleagues Dr. Deirdre Fitzgerald, Respiratory Consultant and Iarlaith Doherty, Senior Clinical Pharmacist following their win at the 12th annual National Health Tech Innovation Awards. The very well attended event highlights the many valuable contributions HealthTech has brought to healthcare in Ireland.

For the first time the Hospital received an award in the Best in Sustainability Category. This category is for teams that have demonstrated how sustainability initiatives have been adopted and ingrained into an organisation's activities, or daily healthcare practise.

The TUH project was on the prescribing of low carbon inhalers, this change is proving extremely effective in reducing a patient's impact on the environment. The team have plans to extend this change of practice out into the Community via the GP network.



Pictured from left to right Iarlaith Doherty, Senior Clinical Pharmacist; Dr. Deirdre Fitzgerald, Respiratory Consultant and Susan Murray from Boston Scientific and the HealthTech Ireland Board.

TUH staff to be offered “Introduction to genetics” programme in 2025

The Adelaide Health Foundation (AHF) have committed €1.5M to the improvement of Ireland's Genetic Counselling & Testing Services. This follows from their commissioned research study to identify the gaps in Ireland's clinical genetic services, which was undertaken by UCD.

Niamh Gavin, CEO of the AHF said: “We are committed to following through on our research projects by supporting the implementation of recommendations. This means that rather than let valuable recommendations “sit on the shelf” without responsibility, we commit to taking some action.”

The full report can be accessed via this [link](#) as well as the [next steps](#) the AHF will be taking with regards to the study.

Through a three-year multi-phase project (2025-2027), and working in conjunction with national, academic and healthcare partners, the AHF will support projects which improve the patient experience, starting with a focus on education, including the development of an accredited programme for Health & Social Care Professions and an MSc in Genetics.

The first deliverable is a pilot project for TUH HSCP staff. This “Introduction to genetics” programme will be accredited by TCD and offered to hospital HSCP staff, with content guided by National Genetics & Genomics office and funding/project management by the AHF. Following evaluation, the programme will be made available to all healthcare staff through HSELand.



Pictured from left to right at the publication of the study were Professor Sally Ann Lynch, Principal Investigator for the study; Lucy Nugent, CEO TUH; Niamh Gavin, CEO Adelaide Health Foundation and John Kelly, Deputy CEO and executive lead for Research & Innovation at the Hospital

Neurology Nursing Team Update



Over the last year the Department has grown. The work of the Neurology Nursing team is predominantly outpatient based where they work with their consultant colleagues.

The team members also run their own nurse led clinics providing timely access to expert assessment, care and support for patients and relatives living with chronic neurological illnesses. The phone lines they run enable flexible responsive reviews where they can alter treatment, provide education, and coordinate care as needed.

The growing team are also able to expand the services they provide, for example the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) nursing team engaged in 2,632 episodes of care in 2023. By September 2024 they had already had 2,697 episodes with 800 patients.

The team are always developing innovative ways of working such as our epilepsy nurses who have recently successfully obtained SPARK funding for a seizure pathway in the ED.

Advanced headache treatments such as nerve block and botox injections are conducted by our headache nurse specialist. Also, our Parkinson's nurse is leading on the introduction of new 'Pro-Duodopa' pumps to improve the effectiveness of treatment and thereby enhancing patient's quality of life.

The Neurodegenerative, Neuromuscular and Neurovascular candidate ANPs are developing novel roles in their respective areas with a strong patient focus. The team cover a range of areas in Neurology and are always happy to answer any questions our nursing colleagues may have.



Sandra Sylvester, CNSp MS; Smitha Samuel, cANP Neuromuscular Disorders; Denise Cunningham, RANP Epilepsy; Renjana Mathew, CNM Parkinson's Disease; Annette Breen, RANP Epilepsy; Sharon Moran, CNSp Headache; Marie Smith, cANP Neurovascular; Nadia Macken, cANP MS; Emmet Kelly, cANP Rare Neurodegenerative Disease and Yvonne McCarry, CNSp MS

Major Celebrations



Our special off site Age-related Unit located at Tymon North recently celebrated its 4th anniversary. The 48-bed facility which is managed and staffed by TUH is located just a ten-minute drive from our main campus. It cares for patients who need ongoing medical attention and rehabilitation before they can return home.

The Hospital was offered the opportunity to manage this unit just before the end of 2020 by the HSE. At that point, TUH quickly acted to transfer a team of our staff to the second floor of the brand-new Tymon North building which opened during a COVID lockdown.

The unit in Tymon North provides unique specialist medical gerontology care, as well as addressing any social care and rehabilitation needs patients may have as they continue their recovery until they are well enough for discharge. There are two wards, Cherry Blossom and Bluebell with a total of 48 beds. Each single room is en-suite with a television. The expected length of stay for patients is two to 12 weeks.

Since it opened in 2020, Tymon North has treated over one thousand patients with an average age of 81 years. After their stay, the majority of patients (750) have been discharged home.



Left to Right Consultant Geriatrician - Dr Sylvia Karpinski, Consultant Geriatrician - Aoife Fallon, Clinical Nurse Manager - Sandra Greville, Deputy CEO - John Kelly, CEO of TUH - Lucy Nugent.



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