

PRESS RELEASE

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Immediate release

LEADING INTERNATIONAL FIGURES IN PALLIATIVE CARE TO SPEAK AT SEPTEMBER CONFERENCE

The Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) has announced that **Professor Scott Murray** from **Edinburgh University** will deliver the keynote address at its conference *Palliative Care for All. Bridging the Gap* on 14th September at the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland. **Dr Jo Hockley** of **St Christopher's Hospice in London** has also confirmed her attendance at the day-long conference in Dublin which is being organised by the IHF's *Palliative Care for All* programme.

The conference will be of particular benefit to disease specialists, palliative care specialists, those working with older people and health planners. People will be able to book a place at the conference until the end of August. Details/queries for booking can be directed to Palliativecare.forall@hospice-foundation.ie.

Extending access to palliative care for patients with conditions other than cancer was a key recommendation of the Department of Health's *Report of the National Advisory Committee of Palliative Care*, adopted as Government policy in 2001.

People with **advanced heart failure, dementia** and **respiratory disease** can live with their illness over a number of years. But their palliative care needs may not always be recognised. The *Palliative Care for All* programme was set up to develop the palliative care skills of staff caring for people with chronic life-limiting diseases in all care settings – nursing homes, hospitals and the community. The aim was to ensure that **all** patients living with life-limiting conditions could access the appropriate care they needed to live a quality life.

As part of this programme, **three action research projects** commenced to develop methods to identify and respond to the palliative care needs of people with these diseases. Three project officers – one for each specific disease – were recruited to work with palliative care and disease specific teams between 2009 and 2012.

People attending the conference will hear the key findings of these action research projects. The advanced respiratory disease project was based at St. James's Hospital, Dublin and involved Our Lady's Hospice and the Liberties Primary Care Team. The heart failure project was implemented in the Mater and Connolly Hospitals and was supported by St Francis hospice and Northdoc Primary Care Network. The dementia project was based at St Joseph's Hospital, Clare Mental Health Services for Older People, with links to Milford Hospice.

Dr Karen Ryan, a Palliative Care Consultant and Clinical Lead for the HSE's Palliative Care Clinical Care programme, who was involved in the heart failure project, stated: *"The action research project in heart failure delivered many positive outcomes, including better understanding and interest in palliative care on cardiology wards. The palliative care team learned a lot about the needs of heart failure patients and how to control their symptoms and to plan for the future. We also learned how we need to adjust our usual practice to support the cardiology and primary care teams. Ultimately, this improved communications and collaboration benefitted the individual patients and their families. The conference will offer a valuable opportunity to share the lessons that have been learned through these three projects."*

Marie Lynch, Programme Development Manager at the IHF, stated: *"Every year over 13,000 (46%) people die from deaths associated with respiratory disease, dementia and heart failure; however palliative care is still strongly associated with cancer, which accounts for 29% of deaths per annum. People with life-limiting conditions other than cancer often die without access to appropriate levels of palliative care. We know that patients benefit most when their palliative care needs are met by their condition-specific specialist who has cared for them throughout their illness. These specialists may require input from their colleagues in specialist palliative care. This conference has been organised to demonstrate how palliative care was included in the service delivery for three disease areas. We hope that people will use the knowledge gained from these experiences to feel confident about including palliative care in the treatment of their patients."*

Prof Scott Murray, who has published widely on this area, will speak about emerging international practice related to palliative care for diseases other than cancer. Prof Murray is a practising general practitioner who leads the first Primary Palliative Care Research Group based in Family Medicine in Europe. The group is based in the Centre for Population Health Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.

Dr Jo Hockley will speak about using action research as a change model in palliative care. She currently works as a nurse consultant (care homes) at St Christopher's Hospice - the first modern hospice. She undertook a PhD looking at death and dying in nursing care homes in Edinburgh using action research.

Details/queries for booking can be directed to Palliativecare.forall@hospice-foundation.ie. Booking will run until end of August. Confirmation of professional accreditation is pending.

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