

# Developing the All-Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIIHPC) Palliative Care Research Network Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022

Dr Jackie Boylan<sup>1</sup>, Dr Mary Rabbitte<sup>1</sup>, Karen Charnley<sup>1</sup>, Brendan O’Hara<sup>1</sup>, Assoc Prof Suzanne Guerin<sup>2</sup>, Prof Sonja McIlpatrick<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care; <sup>2</sup>University College Dublin; <sup>3</sup>Ulster University



L-R: Dr Mairéad O’Driscoll Interim Chief Executive and Director of Research Strategy and Funding at the Health Research Board; Karen Charnley, Head of Institute, AIIHPC; Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD; Dr Regina McQuillan, Chair of the AIIHPC, Medical Director of St Francis Hospice, Palliative Medicine Consultant Beaumont Hospital Service; Professor Ian Young, Director of Health and Social Care R&D at the launch of the PCRN Strategic Plan 2017-2022

## Background

In 2012, AIIHPC established the Palliative Care Research Network (PCRN) to address the need for collaborative multidisciplinary palliative care research on the island of Ireland.

The PCRN’s aim is to undertake excellent research for people who need palliative care that has high impact, builds research capacity and drives collaboration in palliative care, focussing on three main objectives to:

- Integrate palliative care research, education and practice development in the health and social care systems across the island of Ireland
- Partner with people with life limiting conditions, carers and communities to ensure that palliative care provision continues to meet their needs
- Support the development of specialist palliative care to meet the current and emerging demands of the health system

The PCRN is governed by the Strategic Scientific Committee whose membership includes representatives from the PCRN, people with life-limiting conditions and their family/carers (AIIHPC’s Voices4Care Research Panel\*), palliative care providers and funding bodies. The PCRN also incorporates the Early Career Researcher Forum that was launched in 2013 by AIIHPC in collaboration with the Irish Association for Palliative Care (IAPC), for researchers and clinicians from all disciplines who consider themselves in the early to mid-stages of their research career in palliative and end of life care.

*\*AIIHPC Voices4Care is an initiative involving people with life limiting conditions and their family/carers in the development and design of palliative care policy and practice. The Voices4Care Research Panel is a subgroup of these people who are interested in palliative care research.*

## Aim

To develop a Strategic Plan to set out the main objectives of the PCRN and implementation actions required over five years (2017-2022).

## Method

Development of the Strategic Plan incorporated a three phase delivery and included:

- **Phase 1:** Identification of research strategic objectives and activity areas to form the basis of the Strategic Plan with Strategic Scientific Committee members via open agenda meeting and email review
- **Phase 2:** Refinement of the draft Strategic Plan created by the Strategic Scientific Committee with support of AIIHPC via email/ phone review. Participants included: Strategic Scientific Committee; PCRN; Early Career Researcher Forum; AIIHPC’s Executive Committee; AIIHPC’s Voices4Care Research Panel
- **Phase 3:** Prioritisation of key activity areas and actions required to successfully implement the Strategic Plan through a workshop with 17 key stakeholders. Participants were allocated to three working groups and included representatives from across the island of Ireland from: academic/clinical institutions; policymaking/funding organisations; AIIHPC’s Voices4Care Research Panel; AIIHPC representatives.

## Results

### Five strategic objectives were identified:

1. Develop a collaborative and coherent research environment and culture
2. Deliver outstanding, innovative, internationally relevant research on an all-island basis
3. Develop research leaders and research capacity
4. Advance knowledge and practice for hospice and palliative care through interdisciplinary collaborations and meaningful involvement of people with life limiting conditions and their carers
5. Facilitate the effective translation of knowledge on the island of Ireland and internationally

### Five activity areas (each with individual actions) to achieve the strategic objectives were identified:

1. Support the development of a collaborative and coherent research community
2. Build research leadership and capacity
3. Support service user, carer and community involvement
4. Effectively disseminate knowledge from research
5. Build sustainability of the PCRN

### Three of the identified activity areas were prioritised by stakeholders for action as below:

Support the development of a collaborative and coherent research community

#### Actions:

1. Expand PCRN membership
2. Organise and support PCRN Annual Symposium
3. Develop links with a range of networks and organisations (island of Ireland and internationally)
4. Develop a PCRN collaboration plan that supports collaboration between AIIHPC’s partners, policy makers, key stakeholders, people with life limiting conditions and carer representatives\*
5. Identify potential focussed research programmes and ensure research informs and is informed by palliative care policy

*\*consensus from two groups on this action*

Build research capacity and leadership

#### Actions:

1. Partnership for funding calls, AIIHPC, PCRN and funding bodies
2. Expand the Early Career Researcher Forum membership
3. Support Early Career Researcher Forum members to progress to PCRN
4. Develop a coaching/mentoring scheme (PCRN and Early Career Researcher Forum)
5. Develop thematic groups, research clusters and themed research programmes\*

*\*consensus from two groups on this action*

Disseminate knowledge from research

#### Actions:

1. Support PCRN members to ensure projects respond to AIIHPC identified palliative care Top 10 research priorities
2. Ensure two-way engagement with policymakers, stakeholders and funding organisations
3. Seek feedback from PCRN members to encourage ongoing engagement
4. AIIHPC to seek opportunities for PCRN members to influence and inform policy and strategy in palliative care in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland\*

*\*consensus from three groups on this action*

## Conclusion

The PCRN Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022 sets out the direction and actions for the PCRN to improve the quality of life for people with life-limiting conditions by undertaking evidence-based palliative care research, from early career researchers to those leading and shaping international projects. This plan strengthens and upholds the PCRN’s vision that “as the leading network for palliative care research on the island or Ireland, members undertake internationally recognised research that enhances palliative care knowledge and expertise and improves the quality of life of people with life limiting conditions”.

AIIHPC’s PCRN is an example of how by working together and sharing resources on the island of Ireland, we can deliver evidence-based palliative care research that informs education, practice and policy and ensures inclusivity and accountability for people with life-limiting conditions and their carers.

For further information about AIIHPC’s PCRN and the Strategic Plan, visit  
[www.professionalpalliativehub.com/research](http://www.professionalpalliativehub.com/research)