



AIIHPC

Early Career Researcher Forum

Early Career Researcher Forum Newsletter

March 2021

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For further information about the Forum, please contact the Chair, Monika Pilch pilchm@tcd.ie or AIIHPC's Palliative Care Research Network Project Manager, Clodagh O'Donovan codonovan@aiahpc.org

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR MONIKA PILCH

"Help us shape the way palliative care research is conducted on the island of Ireland. Let`s increase the impact together".

Dear Early Career Researcher Forum (ECRF) Members,

Welcome to the March Edition of the ECRF Quarterly Newsletter.

As part of our ongoing initiatives to engage with and share research from our members, I encourage you to read an interesting blog prepared by Dr Anne Fee from Ulster University, who highlighted the importance of the support needs of older male carers. As part of the ECRF Podcast Series, Dr Stacey Power Walsh talked to Deirdre Mc Kenna, who shared her insights on advance care planning and the Heart of Living and Dying (HLD) initiative. These contributions highlight the meaningful and important work undertaken by early and mid-career researchers on the Island of Ireland. Additionally, we are launching a Peer-to-peer support event soon and invite you all to take part.

We are delighted to share the ECRF Action Plan with our members. The ECRF Steering Committee, on behalf of our members, engaged in the development of this document in collaboration with the AIIHPC since 2020. We are motivated to ensure strategic and transparent action, aiming to empower early- and mid-career researchers in palliative and end-of-life care on the island of Ireland. We are particularly proud of progressing both developmental and execution work in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We owe the outcome to the ongoing involvement of the strong ECRF Steering Committee team and the support of our members. Thank you!

Inspired by the health and well-being initiatives undertaken in our society, we recognise the need for self-care practices among researchers in this difficult time. In this Newsletter, we share with you the spotlight on the Stress First Aid event, organised by the ECRF Committee and facilitated by Dr Victoria Lunt/Cooper and Dr Jennifer Wilson O'Raghallaigh. Thanks to AIIHPC support, we can share [a link to the recording](#) for those of you who were not able to attend.

The ECRF Quarterly Newsletter itself continues to prompt discussions and ongoing conversations with our members. Thank you all for sharing your views and thoughts with us. Please continue letting us know about your most recent research achievements (please forward information to [Dr Deborah Muldrew](#)). Help us celebrate your work and highlight it to our networks. Please feel free to [contact me](#) directly if you have any suggestions or would like to get involved in our work.

Thank you for your ongoing support and assistance.
Let`s increase the impact together!

Monika
Chairperson, AIIHPC ECRF Steering Committee

ECRF Podcast & Blog



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PODCAST

In the latest edition of our podcast, Deirdre McKenna speaks to our podcast host, Dr Stacey Power Walsh, about advance care planning and the need for these conversations to be brought into the public domain. Facilitating these early therapeutic conversations gives people and their families the opportunity to truly think of what is important to them. Deirdre speaks of the importance for healthcare professionals in palliative care to engage in these discussions and create an emotional safety for people to have these heart conversations. **Listen here:** tinyurl.com/aiihpcECRFpodcasts.



Deirdre Mc Kenna is a social worker with over 30 years' experience. Deirdre developed the Heart of Living and Dying initiative in 2017 and conducted an evaluation of the initiative as part of her postgraduate study at UU, as a practitioner researcher.

BLOG

What are the support needs of older male carers? In the latest edition of our blog, Dr Anne Fee (Ulster University) reports on her mixed methods study exploring the impact of current support services in identifying and meeting the support needs of older male spousal caregivers (aged over 65) caring for a chronically ill spouse/partner at home in Northern Ireland. Views on traditional masculinity influenced the approach of caregivers, which led to an independent approach and reluctance to seek support. Although satisfaction was derived from the role, caregivers could also experience loneliness, social isolation and challenges to spousal intimacy. Gender-sensitive support within men's healthcare and mental health promotion has shown promise, warranting further research. **Read here:** [Blog](#)

Anne Fee is a Research Associate at Ulster University. Anne previously worked in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, implementing support services for family caregivers, before completing a PhD on the effectiveness of existing support for older male caregivers.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Irish Association for Cancer Research Conference 2021

Details of the programme and registration for this virtual conference will be announced in due course. To submit an Abstract visit <https://bytesi.zedhost.co.uk/iacr/>. Email ccrockford@irishcancer.ie for further information.

Irish Hospice Foundation workshops

The IHF have a series of introductory workshops on a range of topics covering loss and bereavement. Find more information [here](#).



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UPCOMING AIIHPC EVENTS

AIIHPC ECRF Peer-Support Session April 19th, 18:00-19:00

This online session aims to enable members of ECRF to provide peer to peer support to each other on topics relating to palliative care research. The event will be facilitated by Dr Mary Nevin and Dr Cliona Lorton in collaboration with AIIHPC.

Registration at [this link](#).

AIIHPC Digital Communication Skills for Palliative Care Researchers

April 28th, 9:30-13:30

This capacity building online workshop will focus on developing researchers' digital communication. Learn how to share your research messages, knowledge and findings using social media, research videos and blogs.

Places for this event are very limited. Register your interest [here](#).

ECRF Action Plan Summary

The AIIHPC launched the Early Career Researcher Forum (ECRF) in 2013. The forum is multidisciplinary in nature and includes researchers/clinicians from any discipline who consider themselves in the early- to mid-stages of their research career in palliative and end of care.

As part of our current action plan, we have developed a list of core objectives

Increase the capacity and impact of the ECRF including the Committee	Ensure NI/RoI representation on the ECRF Committee
	Increase membership in the ECRF
	Promote transition of ECRF members to PCRN
Develop and implement a communications and social media strategy	Review and update communication strategy
	Publish quarterly blogs from early career researchers
	Develop and publish a quarterly newsletter
	Promote events relevant to ECRF members
Deliver capacity building events and activities	Celebrate ECRF members' successes and research
	Schedule webinars annually, driven by the needs of ECRF members
	Develop and launch peer-to-peer support project
Create networking opportunities	Facilitate engagement of ECRF with the PCRN Annual Symposium
	Actively participate in Palliative Care Week
	Organise bi-monthly coffee mornings
	Develop and launch podcast series
	Develop a Buddy System initiative
	Establish professional links with other early career organisations in palliative care

You can view the ECRF action plan [here](#).

Event Spotlight



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STRESS FIRST AID

The ECRF hosted “Stress First Aid for Early to Mid-Career Researchers” on the 18th January 2021. This webinar provided insightful information and tips on coping skills for conducting research in challenging times whilst working from home. I particularly enjoyed the discussion around “the double-edged sword of values and ideas”. This discussion addressed the strengths and weaknesses around the guiding ideals of selflessness, loyalty, stoicism, strong moral codes and excellence. This live session was followed by a stimulating and interactive Q&A session. As a Communication and Social Media Officer for the ECRF committee, I was delighted to see 38 people in attendance from all over the island of Ireland. The webinar can be viewed [HERE](#).

Written by: Yvonne Muldowney

WORKING FROM HOME TIPS

1. **Keep your routine.** Get up, showered, and dressed- don't lie in until the last minute.
2. **Eat breakfast before you start.** Don't grab coffee and toast while checking your email.
3. **Have a start and end time.** Start at the same time every day- require yourself to be at the desk at a certain time and close off the computer by a certain time as well.
4. **Take breaks.** Schedule these and don't skip them. Move away from the work area.
5. **"Commute to work".** Once up and dressed go for a short walk before you begin work- even walking around the block before you sit down to start the day. Repeat the same at the end of the day. This provides a psychological break between work and home.
6. **Keep your work in one part of the house.** While we are trying to multi-task, home school children, clean the house etc. try and keep your work confined to one area.
7. **Make sure to have a comfortable chair, screen at the correct height etc.**
8. **Talk to your colleagues.** The social aspect of work is very important and feeds our energy. Don't always email- pick up the phone and connect with someone.
9. **Pack a lunch- eat what you would usually bring with you to work- and avoid sugary snacks!** It affects our concentration.
10. **Don't forget to practice self care - maybe yoga, a walk, or a bath at the end of the day.**

Facilitators

Dr. Jennifer Wilson O'Raghallaigh is a Principal Clinical Psychologist at Beaumont Hospital who works in liaison psychiatry. She has qualifications in teaching mindfulness, chronic disease self-management, and a number of psychological interventions.

Dr Vicky Cooper is a Senior Clinical Psychologist working in Beaumont Hospital in the St Luke's Radiation Oncology service. Vicky meets with people and their families when they are navigating their way through the medical system in the Oncology setting.





Celebrating our members' achievements

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our ECRF members on all their hard work. Here are some examples of what our early career researchers have been working on:

Congratulations to PhD researcher **Emma Delemere** on your [latest publication](#); "The role of Connected Health technologies in supporting families affected by paediatric cancer: A systematic review" published in Psycho-Oncology.

We look forward to reading **Deirdre McKenna's** [latest publication](#) "The Heart of Living and Dying: Upstreaming Advance Care Planning into Community Conversations in the Public Domain in Northern Ireland," published in Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care. This work has, to date, attracted 2 awards: Social Worker of the Year, adult services (Regional Social Work Award, NI, 2018); and All Ireland award for her gasta presentation (all Ireland social work conference, 2019).

Well done to **Dr Stacey Power Walsh** on your [latest publication](#) "Experiences of volunteers supporting parents following a fatal fetal anomaly diagnosis," published in Qualitative Health Research.

Congratulations to **Dr Karie Dennehy** who is about to start as Locum Consultant in Palliative Medicine in St James's Hospital. We wish her all the best in her new role.

Interested in sharing your successes?

If you would like us to share your successes through our newsletter, email updates, or twitter, please get in touch by contacting our communications and social media officer, Dr Deborah Muldrew at d.muldrew@ulster.ac.uk. Information for Twitter can be shared at any time, but if you would like to be included in the Summer edition of the ECRF Newsletter, please send your information to us before 1st June 2021.

We need your help!

We are looking for people who would like to support the work of the ECRF from the island of Ireland and are particularly interested in members who are based in Northern Ireland. Some activities you may be involved in include writing/editing blogs, participating in our podcast series, and hosting online-based activities (e.g., webinars).