



Student Events

Medical Society Orientation Week

The medical society's orientation week for the incoming GEMS class of 2016 was the first of its kind. Building on the great success of orientation week in 2011, students were able to attend events each night of the week, got the chance to meet fellow classmates as well as familiarise themselves with the Medical Society committee and upperclassmen and were introduced to the city of Limerick.

The turnout for the campus tours was close to 100 students and it was a lovely chance for groups of 1st year students to be given a detailed tour of campus led by our most enthusiastic and experienced GEMS guides. To bring orientation week to a close, the Medical Society brought back a night at the Limerick Irish Greyhound Board again this year due to its positive reviews from the previous year. It was an incredible night and a great chance to dress up and socialize at a major landmark in Limerick city. It was followed up by another social event in town where students from all 4 years of GEMS got together for a fantastic night that is still being talked about.

GEMS orientation 2012 was an excellent way to start off the year for all 4 years of UL GEMS students from all parts of the world. MedSoc also takes a lead in endeavours, such as raising awareness and funds for prostate cancer during Movember as well as the much anticipated medical ball held in February each year.

Arthritis Ireland Exercise Made Easy Seminar

On Thursday October 11th 2012 Arthritis Ireland hosted a seminar entitled Exercise Made Easy at the Southcourt Hotel. This event coincided with National Arthritis Week and was designed for people with arthritis who want to exercise more, but need help getting started and staying motivated. Most of the people who attended the seminar were people suffering from various forms of arthritis such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriatic arthritis. The entire evening consisted of a variety of lectures including talks from a physiotherapist and clinical psychologist. UL Graduate Entry Medical Students, Isaac Ryan Perlus, Luke Kieswetter, Oluwatosin Akintola and Melissa Shack, volunteered for the event to take blood pressures of the attending guests.

without having a shared language or cultural background. Untrained and informal interpreters and cultural mediators are commonly used in these consultations with evidence of negative consequences for service users from migrant communities. This status quo reflects a gap in translating research evidence about the positive impact of trained, professionals on communication in cross cultural consultations, into routine clinical practice in primary care settings. It is important that health researchers address this translational gap in order to improve migrants' access to, and experiences of, culturally competent healthcare in their host countries. The aim of the RESTORE project is to focus on the implementation of guidelines and/or training initiatives to support the use of professional interpreters and/or cultural mediators to support communication in cross-cultural primary care consultations.

Recent activities

Professor MacFarlane has led the publication of the RESTORE study protocol in Implementation Science, Impact Factor 3.10. She has presented the RESTORE project and represented GEMS, UL at a series of international conferences: the European Public Health Association Migrant Health conference in Milan, June 2012; the European Association of Communication in Health care, St. Andrew's, September 2012 and the Society of Academic Primary Care, Glasgow, October 2012. Professor MacFarlane led a workshop about the use of theory in implementation science research, such as RESTORE, at the North American Primary Care Research Group conference in New Orleans, December 2012.

Co-ordination of €2.9 million EU FP7 primary healthcare project on migrant health moves to GEMS, UL

By Professor Anne MacFarlane

Research into implementation strategies to support patients of different origins and language background in a variety of European primary care settings: the RESTORE project is funded through the EU FP7 programme Health theme. The RESTORE project 2011-2015 is co-ordinated by Anne MacFarlane, Ph.D who took up post as the first Chair in Primary Healthcare Research at UL in 2011. Professor MacFarlane is leading an interdisciplinary consortium of eighteen international senior and early stage career researchers.

The University of Limerick became a formal partner in the RESTORE project in July 2012 joining NUI Galway and academic partners in Scotland, England, the Netherlands, Austria and Greece. This brings a series of resources to GEMS and UL in terms of research funding, enhanced capacity for undergraduate and postgraduate research about migrant health issues in primary care settings and an enhanced international profile for UL's primary healthcare research agenda.

Project description

Migration is a global phenomenon which presents challenges for host healthcare systems. Many migrants and primary care practitioners interact with each other in primary care consultations

UL GEMS Conferring June 2012



Graduation day for the class 2012 at the GEMS – graduation ceremony held in June, 2012.

GEMS Year 1 2012-2013



Current Year 1 students at GEMS pictured in the foyer of the new GEMS building at the beginning of the 2012/13 academic year.

Minister Varadkar visits GEMS



During his Official Opening of the UL Sports Pavilion in October last, Minister Leo Varadkar also visited the GEMS building where he toured the state-of-the-art facilities and laboratories enjoyed by GEMS students and staff.

News and Events

-UL Med Ball, February 23rd, 2013: A great night was had by all at the Strand Hotel, Limerick, at the annual event organised by MedSoc.

-Professor Amanda Cotter, Chair in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Professor Clodagh O'Gorman, Chair in Paediatrics, both delivered their inaugural lectures in the new GEMS building in the last few months. Both addresses were well received by enthused audiences

-We look forward also to Professor Austin Stack's (Chair in Medicine) inaugural, which is scheduled to take place on March 25th; details will be posted on the GEMS website nearer the time.

-The Sylvester O'Halloran annual surgical conference, plus no less than three associated skills training courses and the Irish sitting of the board Examination for ENT ran in GEMS from Feb 28th to March 2nd

-We were also pleased to host the Association of University Departments of General practice on Friday March 8th.



GRADUATE ENTRY MEDICAL SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
SCOIL LEIGHIS IONTRÁLA
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GRADUATE ENTRY MEDICAL SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

UL's Graduate Entry Medical School Has a New Home!

September 24th 2012 saw yet another milestone in the development of the University of Limerick's Graduate Entry Medical School. After five years in existence, the staff and students of the GEMS moved from the university's Main Building, to their new 4,000sqm building on the North Campus.

Located beside the existing Health Sciences and Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, the GEMS Building, easily distinguishable by its limestone exterior, is a stand-out addition to the North Campus. Designed by Grafton Architects, the building has four floors, the first three of which are dedicated to student teaching, with the top floor housing most of the GEMS faculty and staff.

In addition to an imposing foyer, the ground floor is dominated by a 150-seater lecture theatre and two 60-seater seminar rooms, each of which is equipped with the latest in video conferencing technology. The first floor houses the problem based learning (PBL) tutorial rooms, in addition to an open-plan study area for the students.

The second floor is dedicated to clinical and anatomical skills teaching. There are a total of eight clinical skills labs, which can be reconfigured depending on teaching requirements, and two

anatomical skills labs. The labs are equipped with a state-of-the-art AV system, which allows students to record themselves performing procedural or physical exam skills.

Most of the third floor is made up of office spaces which house faculty and staff. The remainder of this floor comprises a research lab which is primed to take its' first occupants in the near future. We are very much enjoying settling in to the new building which will facilitate a wide range of teaching, assessment sessions, as well as conferences and other events for many and varied audiences.



Niamh Cummins (CPR), Mark Dixon (formerly of CPR and now of the Centre for Emergency Medical Science, (University College Dublin) and Joseph O'Halloran (Physical Education and Sports Sciences Department, University of Limerick).

CPR Project Wins International Awards

A CPR (Centre for Prehospital Research) research project recently won the award for Best Scientific Presentation at the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians (NAEMSP) Annual Meeting in Bonita Springs, Florida (January 11-13th). The project entitled "Biomechanical Analysis of Spinal Immobilisation during Prehospital Extrication: A Proof of Concept Study" was presented by Mark Dixon at the conference. The research team comprised Niamh Cummins (CPR), Mark Dixon (formerly of CPR and now of the Centre for Emergency Medical Science, University College Dublin), and Joseph O'Halloran (Physical Education and Sport Sciences Department, University of Limerick). Dr. David Slattery, from the University of Nevada School of Medicine, Las Vegas, who is on the NAEMSP Organising Committee told Reuters Health that this study "really challenged the dogma of what we do. When you are in a motor vehicle crash, we put you in a cervical collar, put you on a back board, tape you down, and it's very uncomfortable. The idea behind doing this is to protect the neck from moving in case there's an injury. The fact that they showed that just having the person get out on their own caused the least amount of movement was amazing". Mark's presentation got a standing ovation at the conference and Dr. Slattery added. "I've never seen a standing ovation after a research presentation before. The finding is preliminary and needs to be validated in the real world, but certainly it is very important work". The research is currently on-going in CPR with Phase 2 of the project being planned for Summer 2013.



Professor Paul Finucane Steps Down

By Professor Deirdre McGrath - Director of Education

Professor Paul Finucane stepped down as the Foundation Head of the Graduate Entry Medical School at the end of August 2012.

Originally from Newcastle West in Limerick, Professor Finucane was instrumental, not only in the University of Limerick being awarded the Graduate Entry Medical School, but also in the establishment of the first Medical School in Ireland in over 100 years.

Known for his warm personality, high standards and determined professionalism, his vision for a 21st Century Medical School being realised is a fitting tribute, both to his commitment to the University of Limerick, and to his native Limerick.

His philosophy that "no problem is without a solution" is firmly grounded in the GEMS culture. His passion, energy and enthusiasm for medical education is infused into the culture of the School and will live on in the calibre of world-class graduates it produces.



2012 GEMS Teaching Excellence Awards

Dr Andrew O Regan received the 2012 GEMS Teaching Excellence Award for his contribution as a PBL and Clinical skills tutor to the GEMS programme. Dr Emer Ahern (St Luke's Hospital Kilkenny) received the other 2012 GEMS Teaching Excellence Award for her contribution as clinical supervisor to student learning.



Prof. Stewart Walsh, Dr Andrew O'Regan, Prof. Deirdre McGrath



Dr Paul Cotter Consultant Geriatrician, Professor Deirdre McGrath, Dr Emer Ahern, Dr Colm McGurk, and Ms Sharon Nolan

GEMS Leads with Study on Psoriasis

A team of scientists and clinicians led by Professor Billy O'Connor, GEMS and consultant dermatologist Dr. Bart Ramsay, MWRH, Dooradoyle employed microdialysis - whereby a tiny artificial blood vessel was painlessly implanted into human skin - to study skin chemistry in volunteer psoriasis patients. The study revealed that histamine - a molecule whose presence has been implicated in psoriasis - was present in both affected and unaffected skin. The findings were published in detail in the Journal of

Chromatography and in the NIH's bulletin. The research team included Prof. Billy O'Connor and Dr. Elizabeth Guihen (GEMS), Dr. Marie-Louise O'Connell (Department of Physics, UL), and Dr. Bart Ramsay and Dr. Lyn Wen Ho (MWRH). The study was funded by a Research Seed Funding Award from UL to Professor O'Connor and has helped foster contacts with local hospitals and consultants thereby providing access to special patient groups.

INMED Assessment Symposium

By Dr Shane O Hanlon

The School hosted the inaugural INMED (Irish Network of Medical Educators) Symposium on Assessment on 12th October 2012. This event was attended by educators working in Ireland and the UK and aimed to facilitate discussion on best practice in assessment. It also offered an opportunity for the School to showcase the new building to colleagues working in medical education. Dr Richard Arnett from RCSI spoke about "Good Assessment Practice", outlining the structures that need to be in place to deliver rigorous assessment. Dr Josephine Boland from NUIG spoke on "Quality Issues in Assessment" exploring the tension between formative and summative assessment and discussing how to ensure constructive alignment.

Adrian Freeman visited GEMS from the University of Exeter in the UK. He provided a tour of the current methods of "Standard Setting in Assessment", giving a real-time demonstration of how different methods influenced the interpretation of results. Dr Katharine Boursicot of St. George's, University of London explained "How to build psychometric rigour and quality assurance into your assessment designs/strategies". She spoke about developing Statements of Purpose for assessments, and how to ensure governance throughout. She also outlined why validity was essential for quality assurance. Finally, Professor Peter Cantillon of NUIG explored the possibility of different medical schools "Sharing assessment



Prof. Peter Cantillon, Dr Kathy Boursicot, Prof. Deirdre McGrath, Dr Adrian Freeman and Prof. Michael Larvin.

Introducing Prof. Ailish Hannigan



Ailish Hannigan has joined the Graduate Entry Medical School from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics in the University of Limerick. As Associate Professor of Biomedical Statistics,

she has responsibility for the development and delivery of biostatistics and quantitative research methods in the curriculum. She also supports faculty and postgraduate research in the school and co-ordinates third year undergraduate research projects. She has a degree in mathematics and computing and a PhD in Biostatistics. She spent four years in the Oral Health Services Research Unit in University College Cork where she was involved in the design and analysis of population surveys and clinical trials and her research interests include the analysis of longitudinal data and survival analysis. She set up the Statistical Consulting Unit in UL and managed the Unit for two years. She has also acted as a statistical consultant to research centres within UL, nationally and internationally. She is passionate about statistics education and has received an Excellence in Teaching Award from the University of Limerick based on student evaluations of teaching across all disciplines and faculties. She is Education Officer for the Irish Statistical Association and a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society in the U.K.

Jack Flanagan Medal

The GEMS was represented for the first time at the Jack Flanagan Memorial Medal Competition at University Hospital Galway on October 18th 2012. Team members Ruth Boylan, Kevin Doody, Ellis Foran and Erin Sullivan were given 1 hour to prepare a management plan for a complex geriatric medicine case and 8 minutes to present it before the judges. All 6 medical schools were represented and the final winners were University College Dublin.

Our team displayed admirable expertise in geriatric medicine and quick thinking while under pressure from the judges' questions. This was reflected in the many positive comments received after the competition. The scene has now been set for regular GEMS involvement in the years to come! The School would like to thank Ruth, Kevin, Ellis and Erin for their superb work and for representing us and themselves so well.



Ellis Foran, Erin Sullivan, Ruth Boylan and Kevin Doody



Medical Voices from Developing Countries

By Ruth Boylan - Year 4

On October 17th 2012, Dr. Martine Makanga from the 'Medical Missionaries of Mary' visited the University of Limerick. As part of UL Social Justice Week, Dr. Makanga addressed staff and students. She spoke about her experience as a missionary doctor and the challenges of providing medical care in Africa.

Dr. Makanga is a paediatric surgeon. She completed her undergraduate studies in Medicine at the University of Congo-Brazzaville. Following specialisation in general and paediatric surgery at Bordeaux and Paris, she worked as a paediatric surgeon in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. Currently, Dr. Makanga is completing research in paediatric surgery at the University Libre de Bruxelles in preparation for a PhD in Medical Sciences to enable her to undertake medical teaching in Africa.

During her short stay in Limerick, Dr. Makanga also visited the University Hospital Limerick. There she met with the staff of the paediatric ward and gave a short presentation about her work as a paediatrician in Africa.

UL was delighted to host Dr. Makanga during her short stay in Ireland. Many of the GEMS students present at her presentation found it inspirational and hope to get involved with medical volunteer work in Africa in the future as a result.

UL Study Finds High Obesity Rate Among Children

A study by researchers at GEMS, UL and Dalhousie University in Canada has found 34% of children between 6-12 years old admitted to hospital are overweight or obese. The study, undertaken at the Children's Ark, University Hospital, Limerick, found that as many as 1 in 3 children have at least 1 fast food meal during their hospital stay. Researchers looked at the types of food eaten by children in the hospital setting, especially the abundance of fried food and the lack of water, brown bread, dairy products, fruit and vegetables.

Study co-author, Professor Clodagh O'Gorman, Chair of Paediatrics & Consultant Paediatrician at Mid West Regional Hospital and University of Limerick explained; "There are approximately 145,000 paediatric admissions to hospital annually in Ireland. Limerick is probably representative of most of Ireland's paediatric hospital wards. The incongruent abundance of fried foods in the hospital setting underlines the

need for the introduction of age-appropriate nutrition guidelines to complement 'Food and Nutritional Care in Hospitals' issued by the Irish Department of Health and Children in 2009." Professor O'Gorman added; "Furthermore, approximately 50% of parents brought food into the hospital for their children. Of these, 60% brought fast food from takeaway restaurants. Children in hospital should be given treats, but these numbers suggest that as many as 1 in 3 children have at least 1 fast food meal during their hospital stay."

Professor Colum Dunne, one of the study's authors and Director of Research, GEMS, UL said "This multidisciplinary study, albeit limited in its scope, showed that almost 24% of the boys and 31% of the girls studied, and overall 34% of the studied children between 6 - 12 years old, were overweight or obese. Awareness and education of lifestyle choices are important, a challenge reinforced by our finding that nearly 67% of parents of overweight or obese children believed that their child was of normal weight."

Inaugural UL Teddy Bear Hospital Launched

By Sheena Doyle

Sick Teddy Bears Receive Top Treatment at UL Graduate Entry Medical School

Medical School students at the University of Limerick today hosted the University's inaugural Teddy Bear Hospital (TBH) with hundreds of Limerick's primary school children and their teddy bears. The aim of the event, which has been organised by five current Graduate Entry Medical School (GEMS) students with a particular interest in childhood medicine, is to alleviate childhood anxiety about the medical environment, its procedures and the professionals that work within it.

Over 75 GEMS students took part in the event which saw 10 medical stations set up in the University Arena focusing on activities including: Triage; Stethoscopes; Vital Signs; X-ray; Exercise; Surgery/Gowning; Asthma; Safety; First Aid and Healthy Eating. Speaking from the event UL GEMS student Kira Gullane said "The UL GEMS Teddy Bear Hospital is designed to be an interactive initiative that allows children to experience the atmosphere of a healthcare encounter without being a patient themselves. Primary school students (aged 4-7) bring their teddy bear which then plays the role of the patient for the day. This visit to the Teddy Bear Hospital provides the children with an opportunity to interact with and assist in a range of simulated healthcare settings, while also providing them with an opportunity to ask any questions with respect to healthcare that may concern them in a friendly and fun environment."

The promotion of a healthy lifestyle and preventative medicine was at the forefront of this educational and fun event. The topics covered included the importance of regular exercise, thorough hand-washing techniques and a healthy diet. It is

also hoped that this initiative will strengthen the relationship of UL GEMS and its students and the surrounding community.

Speaking about the inaugural UL Teddy Bear Hospital UL President, Professor Don Barry said "This is the first time that UL has run this event. Bearing in mind the fact that the Graduate Entry Medical School was only recently established and that its students are undertaking a highly intensive medical education programme it is remarkable that this type of initiative has developed so early in the School's history. It is a testament to the type of student that the Medical School at the University of Limerick attracts."

The Teddy Bear Hospital at the University of Limerick, which took place today on Wednesday 27th Feb 2013 at the University Arena was the first of its kind for the Limerick region. This initiative in Limerick was developed by five current, University of Limerick, Graduate Entry Medical School (GEMS) students: Kira Gullane, Jennifer Johnson, Lukas Kieswetter, Niamh Rafter, and Melissa Shack.



Joshua Adebambi (aged 5), Milford National School checking his Teddy Bear's heartbeat with Ed Chien, 1st Year UL Graduate Entry Medical School Student at the Inaugural UL Teddy Bear Hospital.

Volunteering in Africa with UL GIVE

By Eileen MacMahon

Undertaking an elective in Makiungu Hospital in Tanzania, East Africa, during our summer after 3rd year was one of the most enriching experiences we have had as medical students and a striking example of the potential a doctor has to make a real difference to people's lives. From delivering babies to excising abscesses, to treating malaria and controlling the haemorrhage of ruptured ectopic pregnancies there was no shortage of challenges encountered in our month at the hospital! Paediatric and Obstetric/ Gynaecological patients comprised the majority, and with limited resources and staffing, there was a huge capacity for medical students like us to get hands on experience in managing these patients.

There was an added challenge in dealing with diseases not frequently encountered here in Ireland, such as Tuberculosis, HIV, sickle cell disease and malaria. Our daily duties included

attending ante-natal clinics, assisting in theatre, going on ward rounds, delivering babies and administering medication. Additional things we were fortunate enough to be involved in throughout our time in the hospital included presenting at 'Grand Rounds', establishing a protocol for O2 delivery, revamping the hospital pharmacy and donating blood. Based on our amazing experiences, we would strongly encourage other medical students to consider volunteering in a developing country like Tanzania. Students wishing to do so can contact the UL Graduate International Volunteer Elective (GIVE) Society for further information.



Year 4 GEMS Jill Coll, Ruth Boylan, Pat Owens & Eileen MacMahon with The Flying Medical Service, Tanzania.