Patients and society losing out through lack of investment in health research

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Irish Health Research Forum 10th anniversary event highlights the need for investment in research in the health system

The health system is failing the Irish public by not enabling research as part of healthcare, according to leaders in health research gathered in Dublin today (16th May) to mark the tenth anniversary of the Irish Health Research Forum. Embedding research in health services ensures patients receive the latest evidence-based care, attracts investment in clinical trials, results in more fulfilled healthcare staff, and delivers societal and economic benefits, attendees were told.

Under the stewardship of Health Research Charities Ireland, the Irish Health Research Forum regularly convenes all stakeholders to tackle pressing issues for health research. A consistent and resounding plea from attendees over many years has been for increased capital expenditure in research infrastructure. Despite this repeated call for action, Government investment in R&D at just 0.29% of GDP, is hugely below the EU average of 0.71%, impeding Ireland's ability to conduct world-class health research.

Dr Avril Kennan, CEO of HRCI, emphasised the importance of viewing research funding not as a cost, but as an investment with far-reaching benefits for the health and well-being of the Irish public and for the economy. "*While Ireland boasts exceptional talent in the research community, the lack of adequate support from the state hampers our ability to drive quality research initiatives and prevents many healthcare staff from getting involved in research*," she remarked.

The Chair of the Irish Health Research Forum, Professor Mark White, stated "*Today is a milestone for the Irish Health Research Forum and for the entire Irish Health Research community. We now have 10 years' worth of valuable, consensus-based, system-centred reports and recommendations highlighting the difficulties of embedding research into the health ecosystem but also suggesting innovative solutions. We can do this forever; however, the health system and the government have got to rapidly shift from listening to actioning if we are not to fall further behind the rest of Europe.*"

For a decade, the Irish Health Research Forum has been a catalyst for positive change and advancement in health research throughout Ireland. The recommendations it produces repeatedly highlight that investment is needed in many health research supports, including patient registries, biobanks, research ethics committees, and patient and public involvement initiatives. In conjunction with the 10th anniversary event, a special report titled "Celebrating 10 Years of the Irish Health Research Forum" has been released (https://hrci.ie/empower-innovate-transform-driving-the-future-of-health-research/).

It delves into the transformative journey of health research in Ireland over the past decade, encapsulating key themes derived from previous Forum recommendations. It set the stage for today's discussions among national leaders in health research at the Aisling Hotel in Dublin, as they reflected on past achievements and charted a course toward addressing urgent priorities.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

Dr Avril Kennan and Professor Mark White are available for interview.

About the Irish Health Research Forum

The Irish Health Research Forum brings together all stakeholders nationally to positively influence health

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IRISH HEALTH RESEARCH forum

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research. It was established in 2014 by Health Research Charities Ireland in response to a seminal report titled "The Health Research Landscape in Ireland: What Researchers Say," authored by Professor Bernie Hannigan. Under HRCI's leadership, supported by funding from Pobal, the Forum emerged as a leading force driving positive change in health research.

The Forum considers key health research issues at two events every year and produces widely used reports and recommendations. The events are constructive and inclusive, with benefit to patients and the public being at the heart of all activities.

The Irish Health Research Forum activities are supported by an exceptional and diverse Steering Group of leaders. It includes Cancer Trials Ireland; Enterprise Ireland; the HRB (observer capacity); the HRB National Clinical Trials Office; HSE Research and Development; Irish Research Nurses & Midwives; the National Children's Research Centre; the National PPI Ignite Network; the National Research Ethics Committee Office; Science Foundation Ireland; as well as research policy experts, representatives of HRCI members, researchers, clinical research centres, industry, patients and the public. For more information, visit: https://hrci.ie/irish-health-research-forum/

About HRCI

Health Research Charities Ireland (HRCI) is the national umbrella organisation of charities active in health, medical and social care research, together representing over 2 million people in Ireland. Through support and advocacy, we represent their joint interests, to achieve our vision of improved lives through a united community of health research charities

We offer our members the potential for matched research funding through the Joint Funding Scheme, run in partnership with the Health Research Board. We also run the Irish Health Research Forum, bringing together all stakeholders to improve health research in Ireland.

Our members span many areas of health, including rare diseases, cancer, childhood illnesses, dementia, mental health, and many forms of chronic illness and disability. Collectively they invest almost €20M per year in research. Beyond financial investment, they ensure the relevance of research to the communities they represent, communicate its findings and insist that it has impact for people. Together they provide a beautiful example of what research means to people and families and how its impact reaches every corner of Ireland.

For more information, visit: www.hrci.ie

PRESS CONTACT

Linda McGrath

Events & Communications Manager

Health Research Charities Ireland – HRCI

linda@hrci.ie

0863906054

Company Contact:

Health Research Charities Ireland

T. 00353 1479 3234
E. linda@hrci.ie
W. https://hrci.ie/

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