AIIHPC
Palliative Care Research Network

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14th ANNUAL PALLIATIVE CARE RESEARCH NETWORK SYMPOSIUM

'Research and Policy: Working Together to Improve Palliative Care'

Thursday 20 November, Woodquay Venue, Fishamble Street, Dublin 8 D08 RF3F

Contributor Bios

A very warm welcome to this year's PCRN Symposium. We hope the following brief introductions will help you to get to know some of those here today a little better.

Prof Audrey Roulston is a Professor of Social Work in Palliative Care at the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast and AIIHPC PCRN member. She has over 25 years' experience in palliative care across practice, research, and education. She is the co-chair of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) Task Force for Social Work and is an active member of the EAPC Task Force in Palliative Care for People in Prison. She is the Programme Director for the new Postgraduate Diploma in Palliative Care for Social Workers. Her research interests include bereavement needs assessment, psychological interventions for people living with a life-limiting illness or people who are bereaved, palliative care in prisons and deaths in prison custody.

Austin McCracken is and has been for over 45 years a 'high end' specialist in the Irish Art World and encouraging people to be more visually aware of their environment. Sculpture and drawing would be his forte. His early training was with the Insurance Institute, specialising in investigating and settling claims. For fourteen years he had the pleasure and joy of caring for his late wife who had Alzheimer's. Elsie never experienced a bed sore, nor a urinary tract infection and was never in a nursing home. He is now a member of Voices4Care with the aim to share his caring role for the benefit of others. An active member of the community he has been Past President Belfast Speaker's Circle, Past Chairman Christian Businessmen's Committee Great Britian & Ireland played in an Orchestra, proofreads PhDs, and volunteers for Belfast Hospitality

Dr Bridget Johnston is an Assistant Professor in Health Research at the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Trinity College Dublin and AIIHPC PCRN member. Bridget is a health economist and policy analyst with a wide range of experience in generating and synthesising evidence for the Department of Health and Health Service Executive to inform health policy. In 2022, she led a multi-disciplinary team, that undertook the seminal evaluation of Ireland's national adult palliative care policy. She subsequently served as a policy advisor to the Department of Health during development of the national adult palliative care policy. In addition to her research on palliative care policy and provision in Ireland, she has collaborated on studies in the US, UK and Jordan.

Dr Busra Ertugrul is a Research Support and Knowledge Translation Lead at AIIHPC supporting PCRN and ECRF members, and AIIHPC's hospice and palliative care providers, on research design, methodology, delivery, and impact, including through research Special Interest Groups and Community of Practice for Clinical Site Research to be established in Q1 2026. Busra is an experienced nurse, researcher, and educator who has managed, developed, and delivered research, nursing education, and clinical mentorship programs in both the academic and healthcare sectors. Her MSc and PhD research focused on nursing care quality and safety, and she completed her postdoctoral research at University College Dublin, working on the National Quality and Safety Project.

Dr Catherine Gill is Programme Manager for Targeted Programmes at the Health Research Board (HRB), with responsibility for developing and delivering targeted research programmes to address national health policy and service delivery research evidence needs. Before joining the HRB Catherine worked as a researcher in academia for eight years. Since then, she has worked with the HRB's research funding function in a variety of roles, with experience across a broad range of health research areas, funding approaches and related policy. Working with a wide group of health research stakeholders, Catherine has participated on numerous committees and groups nationally and internationally to influence and support national health research funding, evaluation and policy.

Prof Charles Normand is Professor of the Economics of Palliative Care and Rehabilitation at King's College London, Professor Emeritus at Trinity College Dublin and AIIHPC PCRN member. He was Professor of Health Economics at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Director of the Health and Healthcare Research Unit at Queen's University, Belfast and Principal Economist for Health and Social Services for the Northern Ireland Government. His current research interests are on the economics of ageing, palliative and end of life care. He was a founding co-investigator on the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and has worked on a range of studies on economic aspects of ageing in Ireland. His is involved in ongoing studies on how palliative care interventions affect outcomes and costs.

Éimear OFlynn brings a uniquely informed and deeply human perspective to the conversation on palliative care in Ireland. Diagnosed with primary breast cancer in 2011, she completed a year of intensive treatment, eventually returning to a full and active personal and professional life. Her understanding of palliative care is shaped by her own cancer experience and her role as a carer. In 2020, her husband was diagnosed with a rapidly progressing form of MND; and witnessed firsthand the vital role of specialist palliative care services during the final weeks of his life. This care was delivered under the constraints of the early Covid-19 pandemic. In January 2023, she learned that her breast cancer had metastasised to her bones. Now living with advanced cancer, she continues to advocate for equitable, evidence-informed, and person-centred care for people with advanced disease. A member of the Advanced Cancer Patient Council, she is collaborating with clinicians/researchers/policymakers to strengthen Ireland's approach to advanced cancer and palliative care'; and works to amplify the voices of those living with advanced cancer, and to ensure that patient experience and patient-defined priorities meaningfully shape service design, research agendas, and policy development.

Dr Esther Beck has been a registered nurse for 20 years, graduating with a 1st class hons degree in Nursing Sciences from Queens University Belfast. She completed her specialist nursing practice in both Palliative Care (2007) and Dementia (2009) and worked as a specialist palliative care nurse, before completing her PhD in 2017. She is a senior lecturer in nursing at Ulster University. Esther is the past chair of the Palliative Care Research Forum Northern Ireland and current Chair of the Irish Association of Palliative Care, and a member of the AIIHPC Palliative Care Research Network. She has published widely in the areas of advance care planning and public awareness and has a keen interest in improving symptom management at end of life.

Dr Geraldine Foley is an Associate Professor (Occupational Therapy) in the School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin and AIIHPC PCRN member. Her research is primarily in the field of life-limiting illness, focused on patient, caregiver, and healthcare professional needs and decision-making in palliative and end-of-life care. She is the recipient of both Health Research Board (HRB) and Irish Research Council (IRC) funding. Geraldine has served as an expert reviewer on multiple large-scale international-based research calls, and she is an editorial board member of BMC Palliative Care. She is currently co-academic course coordinator of the MSc Cancer Survivorship programme at Trinity College Dublin. She is also Vice Chair of the PCRN Strategic Scientific Committee.

Jane Clare is the PCRN Project Manager at AIIHPC and plays a key role in the operation and project management of the PCRN, the Early Career Researcher Forum (ECRF) and capacity building activities. She supports service user and carer involvement through AIIHPC's Voices4Care. She has over ten years' experience working in social research, policy and training across movements including the trade union, the disability rights and patient safety movements. She has a Degree and Masters in Sociology and Social Policy and has lectured at third level on social policy and research. Her research interests include the impact of social movements on the development of social policy and rights-based approaches in research.

Dr Janet Diffen is a Senior R&D Programme Manager at Health and Social Care Research and Development Division (co-funder of AIIHPC Palliative Care Research Network Infrastructure support). Palliative Care is one area that sits within Janet's current portfolio and is an area that she is extremely passionate about, having worked at Hospice UK, and within the palliative care research community during her time as a post-doctoral researcher.

Karen Charnley, AIIHPC's CEO since 2015, has extensive experience of providing strategic leadership, financial stability, and brokering relationships between AIIHPC's 28 member organisations (universities, hospices, health and social care organisations and charities), funders and key stakeholders from across the island of Ireland and internationally including government departments and agencies, EU level organisations and international experts. She represents AIIHPC on key regional and national fora and contributes to palliative care policy and strategic discussions. Karen has significant leadership and management experience having worked in housing and homelessness, economic development, and offender management in UK and Ireland. She has also worked as a Programme Manager within AIIHPC where she led on the development of the Palliative Hub and supported the education and practice programme.

Prof. Karen Ryan is UCD Clinical Professor and Consultant in Palliative Medicine at St Francis Hospice and the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and AIIHPC PCRN member. She was Clinical Lead of the National Clinical Programme in Palliative Care from 2010-2018. She maintains active research interests, with a particular focus on health services research and the provision of palliative care for the ageing population and for people with intellectual disabilities. Keen to bridge the gap between research, policy and practice, Prof. Ryan acted as Chair of the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee from 2017-2021 and was Chair of the Steering Group for the development of the National Adult Palliative Care Policy (DOH, 2024).

Katarzyna (Kasia) Patynowska is an HSC R&D Doctoral Research Fellow at Ulster University, Research Nurse at Marie Curie and AIIHPC ECRF Steering Committee member. With over 15 years of palliative care experience spanning community nursing, practice development facilitation, and hospice service development and delivery, she brings wide-ranging expertise to her work. Her current research focuses on developing workplace peer support interventions to enhance the support for healthcare assistants providing palliative and end-of-life care at home, ultimately aiming to improve care quality for people receiving palliative care in the community.

Prof Kevin Brazil is the Professor of Palliative Care in School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast and Professor (Adjunct) Department of Family Medicine, Division of Palliative Care, McGill University, Montreal. His research focuses on communication and decision-making on goals of care for those nearing the end-of-life. His work focuses on assisting the development, evaluation and translation of new and innovative interventions to improve access, quality and outcomes and has spanned the United Kingdom, European Union, North America and Southeast Asia. He has over 200 peer reviewed publications and has been active on numerous international/national advisory groups and on grant review boards in North America, UK and EU. He is also the Chair of AIIHPC Palliative Care Research Network Strategic Scientific Committee.

Dr Lorna Sweeney works on the National Care Experience Programme, a joint initiative from the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health and AIIHPC ECRF member. Since joining the National Care Experience Programme in 2024, Lorna is involved in the analysis and reporting of survey findings about people's experience of care, in order to improve the quality of health and social care services in Ireland. Lorna has a PhD in public health research. She has conducted research and evaluation projects for universities, government departments, healthcare services and community and voluntary organisations.

Prof Mary Lynch is Executive Vice Dean for Research, Strategic Lead for Research, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, RCSI. She is a Registered General Nurse and holds an MSc in Sustainable Rural Development, PhD in Health Economics, Queens's University Belfast and is a Senior Fellow of Advance HEA, and trained Social Return On Investment practitioner. She holds honorary visiting professor roles at University of South Wales, and University of West of Scotland, providing health economic expertise for research projects/PhDs. Her methodological expertise is in applying non-market valuation techniques; Stated and Revealed Preference techniques; incorporating Cost Benefit Analysis, Social Return on Investment, in estimation of social value of public health interventions. Her research interests span public health, environment, behaviour change and valuing public goods and services; and transdisciplinary research on evaluation of nature-based solutions to address mental health and wellbeing, physical activity, use of community assets and rurality.

Dr Mary Rabbitte is Research Programme Manager at AIIHPC, where she leads on the research programme and supports the strategic development of the PCRN and Institute's programmes. Before joining AIIHPC she worked as a clinical psychotherapist with people with palliative care needs within hospice and private practice and holds an MSc in counselling and psychotherapy. Mary has also previously worked in strategic management roles with Ericsson in Ireland and globally for 14 years, a global multinational company in the Information and Communications Technology sector. Her diverse background, including a PhD in Chemistry, has influenced her interest in how interdisciplinary collaboration involving PPI contributors can develop evidence-based solutions that meets the needs of people with life-limiting conditions.

Dr Monika Pilch is a Lecturer/Assistant Professor in the UCD School of Psychology and AIIHPC PCRN member. She completed her PhD in Trinity College Dublin, using a mixed-methods approach, focusing on the design of an innovative intervention for increasing readiness for advance care planning and used behavioural science, a population health approach and co-production. Her innovative research was informed by participation in the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) Health Ageing PhD School (2020-2022) and Innovation and Entrepreneurship programme in Tangent, TCD (2022). She completed her postdoctoral research at UCD, managing the Irish site of an international trial evaluating a psychosocial intervention for people with advanced cancer and their caregivers (DIAdIC). Her interest areas include role of digital technologies in ACP, enhancing communication between patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals, including in care decisions.

Niall Manktelow is Research Manager at Galway and Mayo Hospice and AIIHPC ECRF member. He graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 2011 before completing his MPharm at RCSI in 2012. His interest in palliative care began during his time caring for patients in the community as a Supervising Pharmacist. Since 2017, he has worked full-time in specialist palliative care, serving as Senior Pharmacist at both Milford Care Centre and Galway Hospice. In 2021, he was appointed Chief II Pharmacist at Galway and Mayo Hospice before moving into the role of Research Manager in 2025. Niall is passionate about the role of research in palliative care and its potential to drive enduring improvements in the quality of life for patients with life-limiting illness.

Dr Regina McQuillan is a Palliative Medicine Consultant working at a St. Francis Hospice and Beaumont Hospital in Dublin and AIIHPC PCRN member. She has an interest in palliative care support for underserved populations who are underserved, either because of social disadvantage for example, homeless people, or because of particular diagnosis e.g. intellectual disability, severe enduring mental illness or dementia. She is engaged in palliative care development nationally, including policy development and implementation. She is interested in healthcare professional education and works medical training bodies and education networks to improve healthcare professional education. Her research interests include decision-making in healthcare, including shared decision-making and advance care planning.

Dr Samantha Smith is Research Assistant Professor at Trinity College Dublin and AIIHPC PCRN member. She is a health economist with 20+ years of experience in Irish and international applied health economic and health services research. Her work has focused on policy-relevant research in issues including palliative care (children's and adults), healthcare utilisation and access, chronic disease management, equity in healthcare financing and delivery, and economic evaluation. She has led and co-led large multi-disciplinary projects; filling evidence gaps to improve healthcare access and services.

Stephanie Crawford has previously completed a BSc in Psychology before undertaking a MSc in Applied Psychology at Ulster University Coleraine. Currently, she is writing up her PhD within the School of Psychology at Queen's University Belfast. Her PhD focuses on death literacy across the island of Ireland. She has recently taken on a new role as a Research Assistant within the School Psychology. In this role she will work alongside Dr Lisa Graham-Wisener (School of Psychology) and Dr Tracey McConnell (School of Nursing and Midwifery), on a QUB Agility Fund project to develop an NIHR HSDR grant application in the area of palliative and end-of-life care. She currently serves as the chair for the AIIHPC's Early Career Researcher Forum (ECRF).

Prof Suzanne Guerin is Professor of Research Design & Analysis and former Head of School at School of Psychology, University College Dublin and AIIHPC PCRN member. Her main research activity lies in the broad area of health services research, with a specific focus on topics including cancer, palliative care, and intellectual disability. Her research is across applied health research, applied research and evaluation, and teaching and academic development with a strong focus on research to inform practice. She is an expert in research methodology and is particularly interested in collaborative multidisciplinary research that addresses questions relevant to practice and holds research roles in St Michael's House Disability Services and LauraLynn Children's Hospice.

Tadhg Gleeson is a graduate of the Higher Diploma in Psychology at University College Dublin, incoming master's student in the UCD School of Psychology and AIIHPC ECRF member. His research focuses on Advance Care Planning and explores palliative care experiences among traditionally marginalised communities to promote inclusion and equitable care.