

## Breast Cancer Research Open House

October is breast cancer awareness month and, to coincide with Breast Health Day 2015 on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, the Institute hosted an open house event for women who have had a cancer diagnosis, their family and friends.

Researchers from across UCD Conway, Systems Biology Ireland (SBI) and the Irish Cancer Society Collaborative Cancer Research Centre, BREAST-PREDICT worked together with UCD student societies, One Health and Pharmtox as well as the patient advocacy group, Europa Donna Ireland <http://www.europadonnaireland.ie/> and the Plurabelle Paddlers (<http://www.plurabellepaddlers.com/>)

During the day, there were opportunities across campus to make a positive change for breast health with event stations providing free fruit as well as rowing machines and skipping ropes available for exercising. Volunteers were on hand to provide information and people could share promises for change with friends on social media using Instagram booths.

The evening programme in the Institute allowed participants to hear the latest breast cancer research – from therapies to post-surgical lingerie; visit researchers at the bench in the laboratories and to join a rehabilitative exercise class led by specialist instructor and postdoctoral researcher, Dr Susan Kennedy (SBI).

Dr Clare Corish of UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy & Sports Science sparked lots of discussion with her presentation on 'Diet and Breast Cancer Prevention: Food or Supplements?'; Dr Naomi Elster, RCSI gave a great insight into 'Moving research from laboratory bench to clinical trials'.

There were presentations from Dr David Gomez, Systems Biology Ireland on 'Using maths to beat breast cancer' and Sarah McGarrigle, TCD on 'Obesity, Lifestyle and Hereditary Breast Cancer'. Dr Amanda McCann, UCD Conway Institute and Ciara Conlon, CEO Theya Ireland spoke about their collaboration on using the natural material, bamboo in post-surgical lingerie.

Marie Ennis-O'Connor, Europa Donna Ireland who is a patient advocate and blogger emphasised the need to make research relevant, accessible, and prioritised to patient needs.

Four research groups devised bespoke tours for the participants so as to give them an insight into how research is done at the laboratory bench. Dr David Gomez and Dr Jens Rauch, Systems Biology Ireland demonstrated the use of fluorescent microscopes to light up cells to inform their research on developing new cancer drugs.

PhD students, Paul Lavin & Ciaran Brennan who work with Dr Margaret McGee in the Institute showed how they grow cancer cells in tissue culture while Emma Kavanagh & Matthew Ho Zhii Guang, PhD students with Dr Amanda McCann gave an insight into how breast cancer cells adapt to cope with new microenvironments before spreading through the body.

Professor Helen Roche's team in UCD Conway Institute - PhD students Aoibheann McMorrow, Yvonne Lenighan, Claire Lyons & Elaine Kennedy – gave participants the opportunity to have their blood sugar levels measured at the bench where they do research on nutrients and supplements in health and disease.

Participants were delighted with the opportunity to get 'real insight into the complexities and potential of research'. Summing up her experience, one participant said, "For the scientists and researchers, I hope that by putting faces on their cancer cells they have been encouraged to continue their vital work".