



NOV 2025, ISSUE 19

SPHPSS IN FOCUS

A quarterly newsletter from the UCD School of Public Health,
Physiotherapy and Sports Science



WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the final issue of 2025! We hope you enjoyed the October bank holiday and are re-energised for the remaining Autumn trimester. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this jam packed Autumn edition, and to Cormac Ryan who recently left the newsletter team.

Since our last issue we welcome new staff members Dr Jakim Berndsen, Ad Astra Fellow & Assistant Professor in Artificial Intelligence for Sport Performance, Dr Sara Dada, Ad Astra Fellow & Assistant Professor in Global Public Health and Policy, Dr Maitiú Marmion, Post Doctoral Researcher in UCD Centre for Food Safety, Eilis Fitzgerald, Special Lecturer/Clinical Tutor in Physiotherapy, Alison Brennan, Senior Physiotherapist/Clinical Skills, Dr Dave O'Neill, Teaching Fellow, Sport, Health & Exercise Science, Dr Sri Hari Govind Kaliapuram Narendrakumar, Research Assistant on the AMEN project, Ruairi Weiner, Teaching Fellow in Research Methods and Statistics and Dawn Slattery, Programme Manager in Public Health. Wishing you all the best in your new roles.

We also welcome our students, both new and returning, and wish our recent graduates good luck in their next chapters. After 20 years service to UCD, we said goodbye to Christine Ridge and wish her the very best in her retirement.

There has been much to celebrate across the school, most notably the school has been awarded the Athena Swan Silver award - many thanks to Professor Akke Vellinga, the EDI committee and working groups for all of their hard work. Congratulations also to Dr Mary O'Keeffe on being awarded a prestigious ERC Starting Grant.

We wish the newly appointed Associate Deans, Institute of Sport & Health Director, and Head of Subject Public Health well with their portfolios, and thank our colleagues who stepped down from these roles for all of their hard work.

As always, we hope you enjoy reading SPHPSS in Focus and we encourage you to circulate this newsletter within your networks.

Asst Professor Catherine Phillips
Editor of SPHPSS in Focus

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- School and Division News
- Research Highlights
- Achievements and Awards
- Teaching and Learning Updates
- Healthy UCD events
- School Committee Updates
- New Appointments
- Recent Publications

CORE TEACHING PROGRAMMES

- [BSc Sport, Health and Exercise Science](#)
- [BSc Physiotherapy](#)
- [BSc Sport and Exercise Management](#)
- [H Dip in Safety, Health and Well-Being at Work](#)
- [Cert. in Safety and Health at Work](#)
- [MPH](#)
- [MPH \(Nutrition\)](#)
- [MPH \(Global Health\)](#)
- [MPH \(Epidemiology\)](#)
- [MSc Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics](#)
- [MSc Occupational Safety and Health](#)
- [Prof Masters in Physiotherapy](#)
- [MSc Sport Management](#)

UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science awarded Athena Swan Silver Award

The UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science was awarded the prestigious Athena Swan Silver Award following a successful review by the Athena Swan Ireland panel in September.

Professor Akke Vellinga, who led the review process at the School, said, "This award is an important recognition of our School's ongoing commitment to advancing equality, supporting staff and students, and fostering an inclusive and equitable environment". The award was achieved following an evidence-based review of progress and impacts made against the School's Action Plan developed in 2021, when the School was awarded the Athena Swan Bronze Award.



Commenting on the Award, Head of School Associate Professor James Matthews said, "It reflects the hard work, dedication and collaboration of so many people across our School and we want to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this achievement".

The School will continue to build on its Action Plan and embed good practice into all that it does with a focus on a number of key priority areas.

The School is now one of seven schools in UCD to have achieved a departmental Silver Athena Swan Award. University College Dublin achieved the institutional Silver Athena Swan Award in September 2024.

ERC Starting Grant Recipient: Dr Mary O'Keeffe



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Congratulations to physiotherapy lecturer and researcher Dr Mary O'Keeffe who was awarded a €1.75m [ERC Starter Grant](#) to research the links between pain and social disadvantage.

We wish Mary all the best for this prestigious grant!

Congratulations Louise Quinn, UCD Alumni Award Winner



Huge congratulations to all of the recipients of [UCD Alumni Awards 2025](#). We're especially proud of Louise Quinn, graduate of our BSc Sport & Exercise Management programme, who received the UCD Alumni Award in Sport.

Louise is the former vice-captain of the Republic of Ireland women's national football team. In her 17-year career playing at international level, she earned 121 caps playing for Ireland and gained a reputation as a brilliant defender, an outstanding leader and an excellent ambassador for women's football. Congratulations Louise!

Upcoming Events

Healthy Eating Active Living Week Nov 10th- 14th

[HEAL week](#) is a joint initiative between Healthy UCD and students of the MSc in Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics and Professional Masters in Physiotherapy programmes, aimed at promoting simple and effective ways to fuel our bodies and encourage movement.

HEAL will run the week of the 10th of November with a Sustainability theme. It is open to the entire UCD community and will include initiatives on safe cycling, sustainable eating and using AI to help you manage your fitness and wellness goals!



Lunchtime Lecture Nov 12th: Exploring the Links between Phthalates, PFAs and Breast Cancer

The UCD Centre for Safety and Health at Work and the School's Research, Innovation & Impact Committee are delighted to host a lunchtime lecture on 'Exploring Links Between Phthalates, PFAS, and Breast Cancer'.

The lecture will be delivered by Katherine W. Reeves, Professor of Epidemiology and Associate Dean for Graduate and Professional Studies in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

When: Wednesday, 12 November 2025

Time: 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Where: B005 Health Science Building

About the Talk: Exploring Links Between Phthalates, PFAS and Breast Cancer

Scientists and the public are increasingly concerned about environmental chemicals and their potential impact on breast cancer risk. In this talk, Professor Reeves will share her research examining two ubiquitous environmental chemical groups—phthalates and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)—and their potential connections to breast cancer development. A key focus of her presentation will be to describe and address the unique challenges epidemiologists face when investigating causal relationships in this complex area.

No registration is required for this lecture, and all staff and students are warmly welcome to attend.

Invitation: Special Lecture on Human Biomonitoring Nov 13th

OHSI
OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE SOCIETY OF IRELAND

JACK EUSTACE LECTURE

DR. RER. NAT. HOLGER M. KOCH
Using Human Biomonitoring as an Early Warning System:
A Case Study of Di-n-Hexyl Phthalate Exposure Caused by a Contaminated UV Filter in Sunscreens.

NOV 13 6:30PM DUBLIN

WWW.OHIRELAND.ORG/EVENT-DETAILS/JACK-EUSTACE-LECTURE-1

The Occupational Hygiene Society of Ireland, of which Dr Alison Connolly is the vice-President, is hosting the Eustace Lecture. This year, Dr Holger M. Koch, an external lecturer for the UCD Centre for Safety and Health at Work and collaborator of Dr Connolly's research team, will present the keynote lecture at St James's Hospital on November 13th, 2025, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm.

Dr Koch is the Division Head for Human Biomonitoring at the Institute for Prevention and Occupational Medicine in Bochum, Germany. He has authored over 250 peer-reviewed publications on the exposure and risk assessment of occupational and environmental chemicals, including plasticisers, bisphenols, parabens, UV filters, and pesticides, and has a H-index of 74 and an i10-index of 208. Dr Koch is an Honorary Professor at The University of Queensland, Australia.

Dr Koch will be delivering a presentation on 'Using Human Biomonitoring as an Early Warning System: A Case Study of Di-n-Hexyl Phthalate Exposure Caused by a Contaminated UV Filter in Sunscreens'. Tickets are free, but you must reserve them [here](#).



UCD SPHPSS Academic Appointments

Congratulations to the SPHPSS faculty members who were appointed, with effect from September 1st, as:

- Associate Dean of Global Engagement: Assistant Professor Joel Rookwood
- Associate Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Associate Professor Tara Cusack
- Associate Dean of Teaching & Learning: Assistant Professor Keith Smart
- Head of Subject, Public Health: Associate Professor Carla Perrotta
- Director, Institute of Sport & Health: Professor Catherine Blake

We wish Joel, Tara, Keith, Carla and Catherine well in their new roles.

Associate Professor James Matthews, Head of the SPHPSS, thanked the following colleagues who stepped down from their Associate Dean roles and acknowledged their hard work on behalf of the School in their portfolios:

- Associate Professor Conor Buggy: Associate Dean of Global Engagement
- Professor Akke Vellinga, Associate Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:
- Associate Professor Carla Perrotta: Associate Dean of Teaching & Learning
- Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick: Head of Subject Public Health.

Upcoming CSTAR Training

CSTAR
CENTRE FOR SUPPORT AND TRAINING
IN INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

09-11 DEC 2025 | UCD BELFIELD

**STATISTICS
WITH R**

www.cstar.ie/courses

09/12 INTRO TO R
09/12 INTRO TO R DATA VISUALISATION
10/12 INTRO TO STATISTICS WITH R
11/12 REGRESSION WITH R

HSE Lunchtime Lecture - Emerging Drug Trends in Ireland



Healthy UCD, in partnership with the HSE, delivered a lunchtime talk on Emerging Drug Trends in Ireland on Friday 7th of November at 1pm in the UCD Village Auditorium.

This talk by Nicki Killeen, the Emerging Drug Trends Project Manager at the HSE, covered the evolving drug markets, the current drugs landscape, the health impacts of drugs and the role of drugs monitoring.

Full details are available on the Healthy UCD [website](#) and social media channels.

September Graduations

On the 4th September, we bid a fond farewell to our BSc Physiotherapy, BSc Sport & Exercise Management, BSc Health & Performance Science and Professional Masters in Physiotherapy classes of 2025, in addition to our latest PhDs. We're very proud of you all and wish you all the very best in your careers. You can find more pictures in our [Graduation Gallery](#).



Welcome New Staff Members!

Teaching Fellow, Sport, Health & Exercise Science



Dr Dave O'Neill joins the SPHPSS with a background in sport science, physiology, and applied performance coaching. He completed his PhD in Physiology at South East Technological University, Waterford, where his research explored both the physiological and behavioural aspects of rapid weight loss amongst jockeys, contributing to a deeper understanding of athlete health, performance, and the cultural factors influencing weight management in sport.

Dave holds an undergraduate degree in Sport Coaching and Performance and a Master's degree in Strength and Conditioning. His interests lie in athletic development, strength and conditioning, and the integration of training, nutrition, and recovery strategies to enhance performance.

Dave has extensive applied experience working with athletes and teams across Gaelic games and various other sports. He is also the founder of Elevate Performance, a coaching and consulting service that combines scientific evidence with practical application to support athletes in optimising their performance and health. He is passionate about bridging the gap between science and practice, empowering athletes and practitioners to apply evidence-based methods in real-world settings.

Research Assistant, Public Health AMEN Project



Dr Sri Hari Govind (Hari), a Medical Doctor from India, recently joined our School as a Research Assistant on the AMEN project, led by Assistant Professor Catherine Phillips. Hari is an Erasmus Mundus Scholar with a double Masters in Public Health, and Environmental and Occupational health, working in the intersection of Climate, Health, Migration and Early Childhood Development. He is not a stranger to UCD, having already spent one year of his European Public Health Masters at the School.

Hari has served as co-chair to the United Nations Network on Migration Workstream on Future Health Emergencies and held advisory positions to the International Data Alliance for Children on the move and to the Children, Cities and Climate Action Lab, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

His prior work includes being a Climate Change Consultant to the Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood, a Climate and Health Education Fellow with the GCCHE at Columbia University, and a Visiting Scholarship at the Praboromarajchanok Institute in Thailand. In his free time, Hari likes to read and play tennis - he is currently on the lookout for tennis partners to play with, so get in touch if interested!

Special Lecturer/Clinical Tutor, Physiotherapy



Eilis Fitzgerald recently joined the SPHPSS as a Special Lecturer/Clinical Tutor in Physiotherapy. She holds a BSc in Physiotherapy from Trinity College Dublin (2018) and an MSc in Healthcare Leadership from the University of Warwick (2024). Her clinical expertise lies in Critical Care and Major Trauma, having previously worked as a Senior Physiotherapist in Critical Care and Clinical Tutor in Acute Care at the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital.

Eilis is also the Education Officer for the Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapy Research Committee within the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists, playing a key role in advancing education delivery for its members. At SPHPSS, Eilis teaches across both undergraduate and postgraduate Physiotherapy programmes in the cardiorespiratory modules and supervises students during clinical placements.

Joint Alumni and Student Events

Huge thanks to our incredible SPHPSS alumni who are always so generous with their time and willingness to support and help our current students. In September, MSc Sport Management alumni Sinead Gordon (Sport Ireland), Martin O'Brien (Future Ticketing) and Darragh Cunningham (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth), joined us at the National Handball Centre at Croke Park where they shared their experiences of UCD and their careers so far with our new MSc Sport Management students. Several other alumni joined us for what was a fabulous kick-off to the coming year.



In October, we launched our inaugural Sport & Exercise Management Alumni Mentorship programme. Students on our BSc Sport & Exercise Management course will be mentored by some of our incredible alumni including Colin Armstrong (Swim Ireland), Craig Derham (Verve: The Live Agency), Rob Burke (Leinster Rugby), Orla Haran (Crystal Palace FC), Nora Stapleton (Sport Ireland), Jeff Lahart (Special Olympics International), Vinny Hammond (Irish Rugby Football Union) and Ben Mulholland (Red Bull). Sincere thanks to our alumni mentors who are giving their time and enthusiasm so generously and the UCD Alumni team together with SPHPSS Dr Andre Andrijew who brought this initiative together.



HSE QUIT Programme

Healthy UCD, in partnership with the HSE and UCD Student Health, are delighted to continue delivering the [Free HSE QUIT Programme](#) on the Belfield Campus from September 2025. The programme is open to ALL on campus - students and staff - and is being delivered in the UCD Village for the whole academic year.

One-to-one appointments are offered with the HSE Stop Smoking Advisor, and free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is provided. The Stop Smoking Advisor helps the person to make a QUIT plan and together they can discuss current smoking habits, concerns about quitting and advice on how to cope with cravings and withdrawal. People also have the opportunity to test their carbon monoxide levels at each appointment to track their progress.



Pictured (l-r): Dr Eadaoin Lysaght, UCD Student Health, Dr Kate Frazer, Healthy UCD Tobacco Free Working Lead, Nuala Cody, HSE Stop Smoking Advisor, Dr Celine Murrin, Chair of the Healthy UCD Steering Committee, Mags Carey, Healthy UCD Health Promotion Coordinator

New committee members wanted for the Postgraduate Student Committee

The Postgraduate Student Committee in SPHPSS is looking for new members!

We are a group of passionate PhD students, based throughout the school, who run events and social meet-ups for graduate research students throughout the year. We run a Stage Transfer Assessment workshop, which takes place in April and November of each year, to help prepare Stage 1 PhD students to do their Stage Transfer Assessment. We run bimonthly social meetups after work, and we have a WhatsApp group for postgraduate students. We also run talks and seminars for students to participate in.

Any PhD students interested in joining the committee, please contact Darragh Doherty at darragh.doherty@ucdconnect.ie.



Climate Fresk



Pictured: UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences staff participating in a Climate Fresk workshop, August 2025

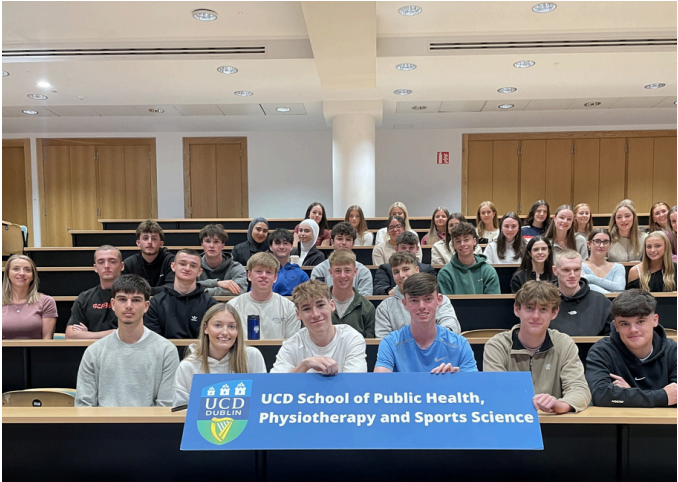
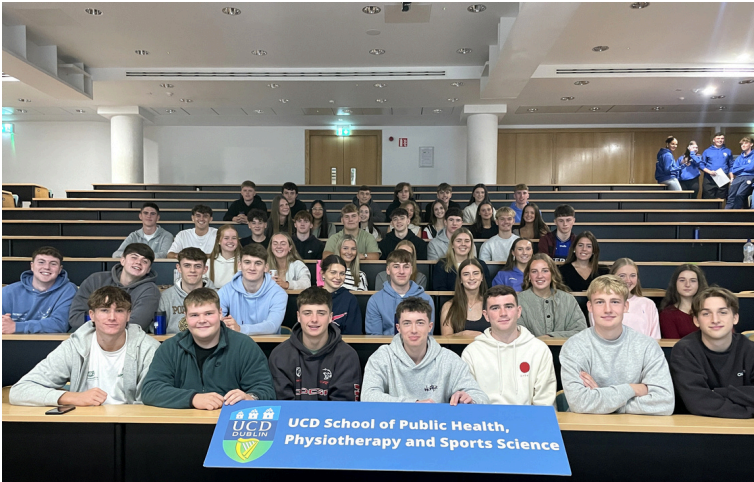
A prerequisite for joining the facilitator training is to attend a Climate Fresk workshop. Dr Sarah Browne offered a workshop to SPHPSS staff and nutrition colleagues from the School of Agriculture and Food Science, and it took place on the 22nd August. If there is sufficient interest, more workshops can be arranged. Please feel free to email Sarah at sarah.browne1@ucd.ie.

[Climate Fresk](#) is a 3-hour accessible, interactive workshop where participants learn the basics of climate science and climate change. By understanding the challenges, participants are prompted to reflect and are empowered to take constructive action to promote planetary health. Climate Fresk is a powerful, democratic tool for providing a quality climate education. It is accessible to anyone and can be scaled quickly within an organisation or community.

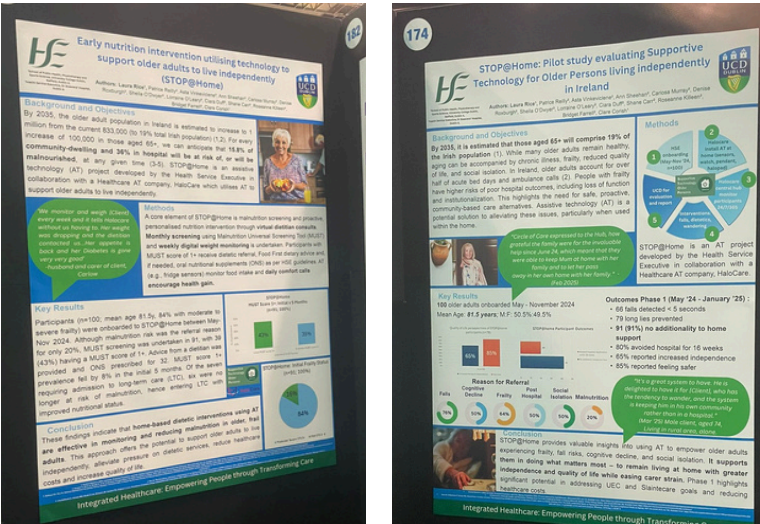
The Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics team within SPHPSS is planning to implement Climate Fresk as part of its planetary health curriculum from January 2026. In preparation, facilitator training for up to 14 staff and postgraduate students will take place on Friday 28th November 2025.

Welcome New Students!

In September we were delighted to welcome all of our new students to SPHPSS. We are thrilled that you've joined our School and have been enjoying getting to know you over the last couple of months. Find your picture in our [Orientation Gallery!](#)



STOP@Home Success



The STOP@Home project is a pioneering, technology-enabled care model designed to support 95 older individuals living at home, including 25 recently discharged from acute hospitals and 70 awaiting Home Support Services to help them live independently, safely, and with dignity. STOP@Home is built around three key pillars: Safety, Social Connection, and Wellness.

The UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science is providing the HSE with an independent evaluation of the project. STOP@Home was recently short-listed for the 2025 Irish Healthcare and HSE Excellence awards.



The SPHPSS senior research scientist evaluating the STOP@Home project, Laura Rice, also presented two posters on the project at the HSE Integrated Care Conference on September 4th.

Pictured (l-r): Denise Roxburgh, General Manager, HSE Dublin South and Wicklow, Professor Clare Corish, SPHPSS, Asta Vinkeviciene, Business Operations Manager, HSE, Ann Sheehan, General Manager, Public Involvement, Culture and Risk Management and Laura Rice, Senior Research Scientist, STOP@Home, SPHPSS

UCD Virtual Masters Week

UCD Virtual Master's Week is taking place from 24th-27th November. If you are interested in postgraduate study, don't miss these four days of interactive webinars where we will be giving expert insights and practical tips to help you choose the right Master's programme for you. SPHPSS webinars will take place on Day 4, Thursday 27th November:

15:00-15:30	Master of Public Health Programmes
16:00-16:30	MSc Sport Management Programme
17:00-17:30	Professional Masters in Physiotherapy Programme
18:00-18:30	MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Programme
19:00-19:30	MSc in Occupational Safety and Health Programme

During the webinars, you will hear directly from our academics and staff about our Master's programmes, get clear information on eligibility and application requirements, explore how postgraduate study can deepen your expertise, broaden your network and advance your career, and you will be able to chat live with current students and graduates about their experiences at UCD. Find out more and register for the webinars [here](#).

UCD Master's Week 24-27 November

"I've never experienced students so engaged and involved"

Ivan,
Master's Student

University College Dublin
Ireland's Global University

Accelerating Progress on the SDGs through Research, Innovation and Partnerships: Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland Event

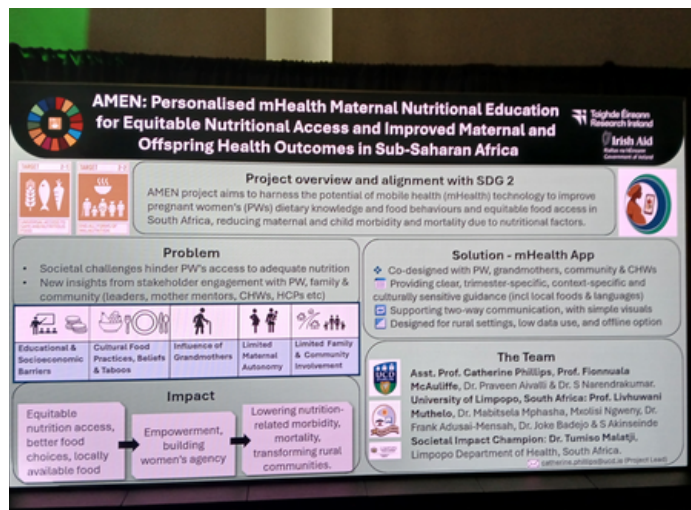


The SDG Challenge is a partnership between Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland and Irish Aid, designed to advance Ireland's dual ambitions in research and international development. The programme supports diverse, transdisciplinary teams in developing transformative, sustainable solutions to complex development challenges countries supported by Ireland's Official Development Assistance.

An event held on 4th November 4th at the Thomas Prior Hall, Clayton Hotel Ballsbridge, showcased the achievements of the SDG Challenge teams and the transformative partnerships they have forged, highlighting how cross-border, cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary research can generate actionable insights, support evidence-informed decision-making, and drive innovation.

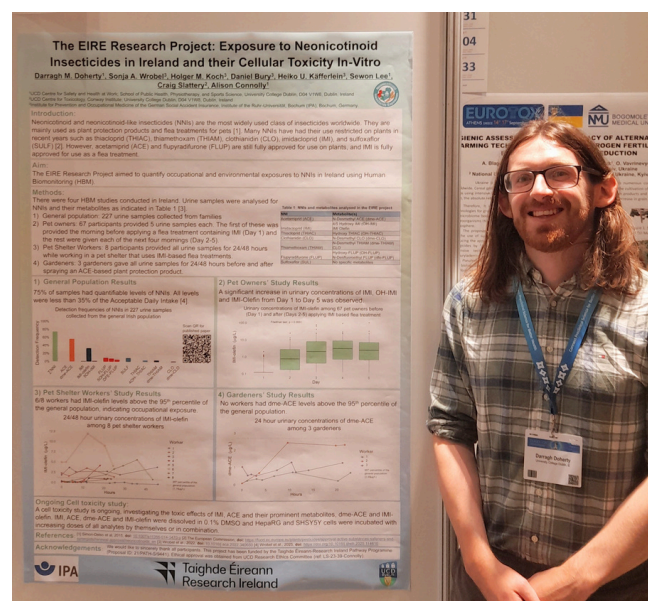
In attendance was Assistant Professor Catherine Phillips, project lead on the AMEN project, which is focused on mHealth maternal nutritional education for equitable nutritional access and improved maternal and offspring health outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Working in collaboration with project partners in the University of Limpopo, South Africa, the UCD AMEN team includes Professor Fionnuala McAuliffe, School of Medicine, Dr Praveen Aivalli and Dr Sri Hari Narendrakuma, School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science.



Pictured: AMEN project digital poster on display at the event

PhD Student Poster Presentation at EUROTOX 2025



Pictured: Darragh presenting his poster at EUROTOX 2025

Darragh Doherty is a PhD student based in the Centre for Safety and Health at Work in the SPHPSS, working under the supervision of Dr Alison Connolly. Darragh presented a poster detailing his research as part of the EIRE research project at the EUROTOX 2025 conference, which took place in Athens from 14-17 September.

Darragh's research involves analysing exposures to neonicotinoid insecticides (NNIs) among the Irish population. NNIs are a class of pesticides that target and kill harmful insects and are used as plant protection products and as flea treatments for pets. As part of the EIRE research project, urine samples from the general Irish population were analysed for different NNIs and widespread exposure to NNIs was shown.

In addition, pet owners who use flea treatments containing imidacloprid, which is an NNI, have slightly elevated levels of imidacloprid compared to the general population. Importantly, all levels of NNIs quantified in this research were well below the Acceptable Daily Intake, an EU guidance value detailing the amount of a pesticide that can be consumed daily with no appreciable health risk. Therefore, based on current guidelines, Irish people are protected from adverse health outcomes due to NNI exposures.

UCD Volunteer Overseas (UCDVO) Recognition Evening



On Friday 3rd October, many parents, loved ones, students and staff braved Storm Amy to gather in the Sutherland Law Building to see UCDVO students graduate from this year's UCDVO programme. Many of the students were drawn from SPHPSS programmes including Physiotherapy, Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics, and Sport Management. It was a wonderful evening where we heard, via video, from partners in Uganda (Nurture Africa, Kisiizi Hospital, Uganda GAA, ECO Brixs), Tanzania (Holy Union Sisters Health, Holy Union Sisters Education), and Cambodia (MOEI 1 and 2) about the amazing work that UCD students had accomplished during their time working with UCDVO and the contribution the projects made to their communities.

Student representatives from each project also delivered a presentation highlighting what their project entailed while describing what they experienced and the contribution they made during their projects. Professor Dolores O'Riordan, Vice-President for Global Engagement, presented the certificates to all volunteers and went on to address the gathering, congratulating the volunteers on their achievements. Following the formalities there was a reception hosted by UCD Global with excellent music by the staff band.

The link between the SPHPSS and UCDVO offers an important opportunity for students across our programmes to gain valuable work experience while contributing to communities in developing countries.

Thank you to UCDVO staff Hilary Minch, Sorcha Lyne and Zoe Liston for the amazing work they do throughout the year preparing volunteers for travel, working with partners, and supporting volunteers during the projects. Thank you to Associate Professor James Matthews, Head of School for his support and to the faculty within the school, in particular Dr Sinead McMahon Director of Clinical Education, who supports this excellent work.



Professor Dolores O'Riordan, UCD Vice-President for Global Engagement



Uganda GAA Project (l-r): Quin Brown, Fintan Ryan, James Cardiff, Kate Byrne, Paddy Harrington, Orlaith Travers, Myles Lonergan, Amelia Opperman



Uganda Kisiizi Hospital Project (l-r): Hugh O'Brien, Muireann Mulcahy, Polly Peters, Emily Quinn, Lucy Power, Ciara O'Kane, EmmaJane McKeon, Mia Cassandro, Gillian Palmer, Hannah Goodfellow, Niamh O'Donnell, Una Filan



Tanzanian Health Project (l-r): Julianne Fallon, Stephy Regi Paul, Ruanne Whitelaw, Aoife Kelly, Una Stephens, Alik Vlasopoulou, Caoimhe Monaghan, Tara Cusack (not in photo: Niamh Phelan, Katie Farrell)



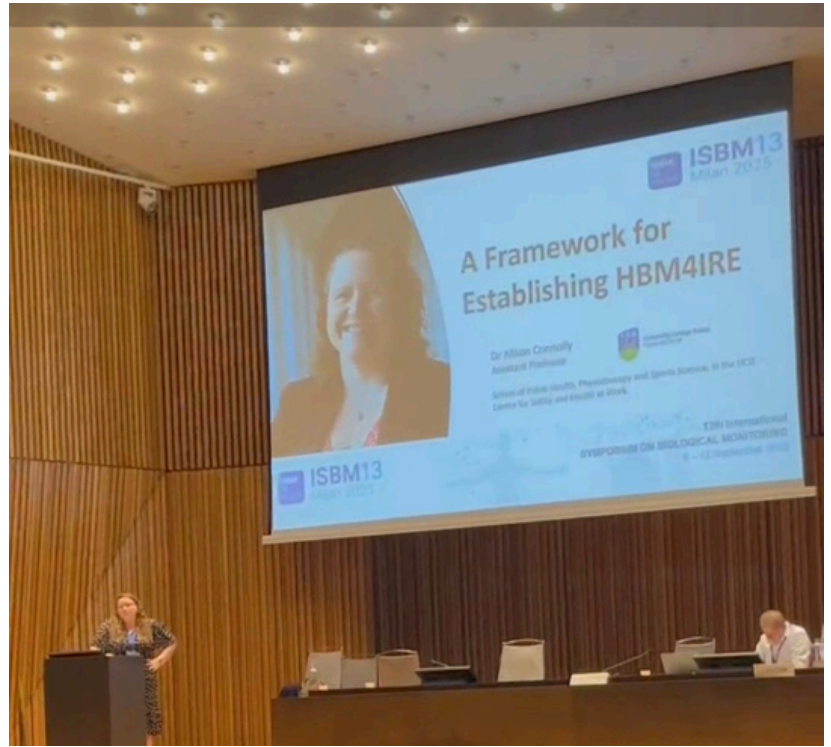
Uganda Nurture Africa Project (l-r): Andrew Whyte, Lynda Gahan, Kyna Kennedy, Lucy Weld, Ben McAleese

13th International Symposium on Biological Monitoring

Assistant Professor Dr Alison Connolly and PhD candidate Darragh Doherty both attended the 13th International Symposium on Biological Monitoring (ISBM13) in occupational and environmental health, from September 9-12, 2025, in Milan, Italy. Dr Connolly presented on the work of the Human Biomonitoring for Ireland (HBM4IRE) research project, developing a framework for establishing an Irish human biomonitoring programme. An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report was recently published on this [project](#).

Darragh Doherty, a PhD candidate within Dr Connolly's research group and working in the Conway Institute, also attended the conference and presented a poster on his research studies for the Neonicotinoid Insecticide Study. Darragh specifically presented on the exposure of the Irish population to neonicotinoid insecticides and their cellular toxicity, studied in vitro.

Pictured: Assistant Professor Alison Connolly presenting the research findings of HBM4IRE at the conference



The image shows a circular yellow digital badge for UCD Teaching and Learning. The outer ring contains the text 'UCD TEACHING AND LEARNING' at the top and 'ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING' on a blue banner at the bottom. The center features the UCD Dublin crest, which includes a harp and the text 'UCD DUBLIN'.

New UCD T&L Digital Badge: Teaching in Active & Collaborative Learning Spaces

UCD Teaching & Learning is launching its first digital badge, a non-credit professional development opportunity designed to help staff enhance teaching and student learning in the university's Active Learning Environments (ALEs), including those in the new UCD O'Connor Centre for Learning.

The link to this new digital badge can be found [here](#).

Honorary Fellowship awarded by Royal College of Physicians to former UCD SPHPSS PhD Student



Warm congratulations to Dr Victor Mukonka who was awarded an [Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians](#) in Ireland on October 15th, 2025 for his work in Public Health in Zambia.

Victor previously completed his PhD at the UCD SPHPSS in 2016 under the supervision of Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick.

Academic Partnership and Knowledge Exchange

Doris Cement Nanga, Lecturer in Clinical Dietetics and Deputy Head of Department, Department of Human Nutrition and Health, Faculty of Food and Human Sciences, LUANAR, Lilongwe, Malawi visited the dietetics team from 2nd to the 9th of October. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the two universities. Visits were arranged for Airfield Estate, community home enteral feeding, neonatal unit, NMH, MMUH and Healthy UCD as well as time spent on reviewing curricula and placement policies and procedures, and potential collaborations with UCD Volunteers Overseas, offering great learning opportunities for all involved. Appreciation is expressed to the UCD Africa Engagement Seed Fund for funding our project on "Advancing Dietetics Training in Malawi: A UCD-LUANAR Knowledge Exchange Initiative". This visit follows from a successful ESTHER grant which recently culminated in publication of an article in BMC Geriatrics titled ["Risk of malnutrition, food insecurity, dietary quality, and associated factors among Malawian older adults at hospital admission: a cross-sectional study"](#).



Pictured: Doris Cement Nanga



Pictured (l-r): Sarah Browne, Doris Cement Nanga, Ruth Charles, Emily Quinn and Gillian Palmer



Advanced Research Methodology in Lausanne, Switzerland



Pictured: Advanced Research Methodology class

As part of the Swiss-Irish Health Sciences Doctoral Programme, Catherine Fallon (PhD student) and two PhD students from the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems travelled to Lausanne to participate in the Advanced Research Methodology course.

The programme, supported by a travel stipend, took place across two teaching blocks (30th June–2nd July and 28th–29th August 2025). The course was delivered by Professor Emmanuelle Opsommer, and seven other PhD and MSc students from physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics, and nursing studying in Switzerland also took part.

Over the course of the sessions, a range of methodological approaches were covered: advanced statistical methods, Delphi design for consensus building, questionnaire development and validation and application of AI in health science research. This programme provided a valuable opportunity for cross-disciplinary and cultural exchange.

Help Us Understand Chemical Exposure in Ireland's Population: Volunteers Needed for Ireland's Human Biomonitoring Study!

Have you ever wondered what chemicals you might be exposed to in your daily life, through the air you breathe, the food you eat, or the products you use? Researchers at UCD are inviting young adults aged 18–39 years to take part in a groundbreaking national study that aims to answer exactly that question.

Human biomonitoring (HBM) is considered the gold standard for assessing chemical exposure in populations by measuring chemicals and their metabolites directly in biological samples such as blood or urine.

The current study will help scientists understand how environmental chemicals are entering the bodies of people in Ireland and at what levels. By participating, you will play a vital role in shaping future environmental health policies and contribute to a healthier, safer Ireland. Building on the successful HBM4IRE feasibility study, which laid the foundation for developing a national Human Biomonitoring programme in Ireland, this 4 year study will provide valuable insights into real-life chemical exposures and help identify actions to protect public health by measuring ten groups of priority chemicals and their metabolites.

The HBM4IRE study is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and co-funded by the Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals, reflecting a strong national and European commitment to advancing environmental health research in Ireland.

Recruitment begins in November 2025, and we are looking for volunteers to join this important national effort. If you want to participate in the study, please email: hbm4ie@ucd.ie.

To learn more about the project, visit: <https://www.ucd.ie/phpss/research/hbm4ie/> and write to Dr Alison Connolly (alison.connolly@ucd.ie) or Dr Richa Singh (richa.singh@ucd.ie).

The full HBM4IRE feasibility study report can be accessed [here](https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/environment--health/research-491-human-biomonitoring-for-ireland-the-hbm4ire-study.php) and <https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/environment--health/research-491-human-biomonitoring-for-ireland-the-hbm4ire-study.php>



Pictured: Zooming in on Ireland's chemical exposure, every volunteer will help us see the bigger picture of chemicals of concern in Ireland

Interested in joining the Newsletter Team?



We are looking for PhD students from across the school to join our team and work with us producing our quarterly newsletter.

SHPHSS in Focus is an excellent example of a successful staff student partnership. It is also a great way for students to earn hours towards their school contributions.

As some of our team members are nearing the end of their PhD journeys, we are now looking for 3-4 students to join the team.

Any interested PhD students should contact Catherine Phillips at catherine.phillips@ucd.ie

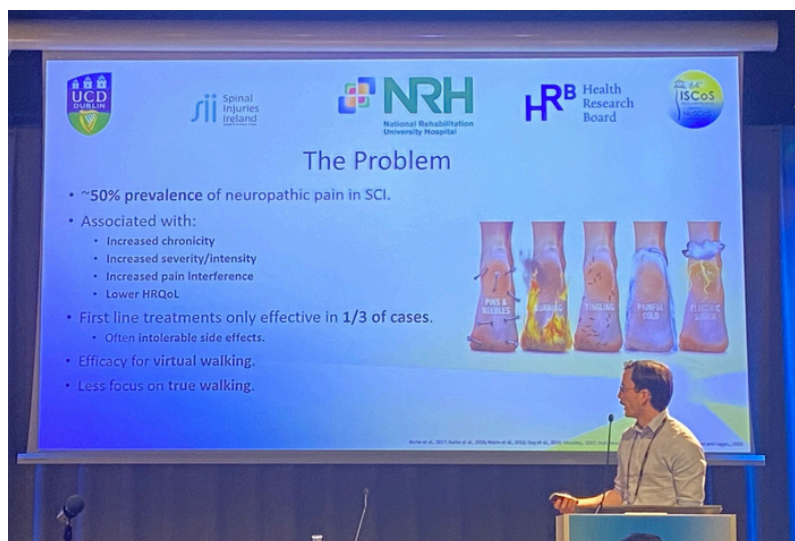
PhD Student Conor White at ISCOS 2025 and NeuPSIG 2025

Physiotherapy PhD student Conor White attended the 9th International Congress in Neuropathic Pain in Berlin in September and the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOS) ASM 2025 in Gothenburg in October.

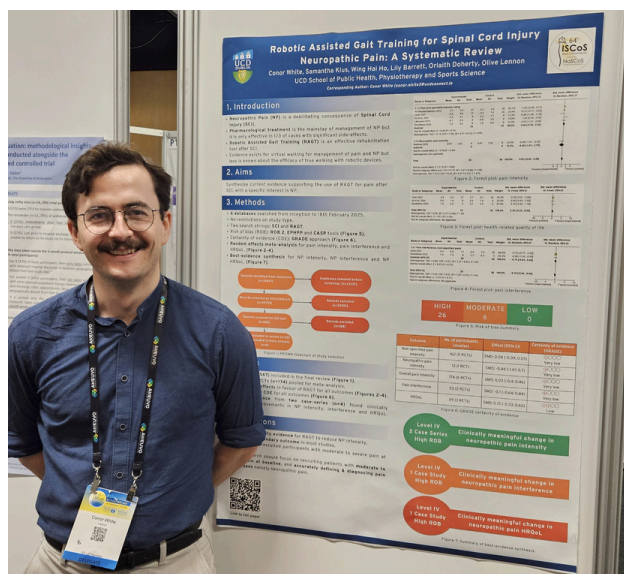
Conor presented his doctoral research as part of the HRB funded ExSCIP project titled: "Robotic-assisted gait training for spinal cord injury neuropathic pain: A systematic review". This study provides the basis for the ongoing randomised feasibility trial exploring the feasibility of exoskeleton walking as a potential non-pharmacological treatment for people living with neuropathic pain after spinal cord injury. Conor's PhD is supervised by Associate Professor Olive Lennon and Professor Catherine Blake.



Pictured: Conor White at NeuPSIG 2025



Pictured: Conor White at ISCOS 2025



Invited Talk HPV Special Interest International Network

Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick was invited to present at the HPV Special Interest International Network Webinar 9th Sept 2025. The title of her presentation was "Irish Travellers: cervical cancer awareness and screening participation".

The PARA Academy Enters its Second Year

On Saturday the 18th of October, the Para Athletics Research and Application (PARA) Academy entered its second year, with the six returning and three new athletes entering the talent development programme.

The PARA Academy is a collaboration between Annmarie Carroll and Professor Kate Pumpa at UCD, and Alison O'Riordan and James Nolan at Para Athletics Ireland. The aim of the academy is to identify and develop talented athletics athletes, with the long term goal of Paralympic success. Six Stage 3 Health and Performance Science students ran the testing stations as part of their final year project, with previous graduate and now Masters by Research student Troy Kinch-Randell helping out.

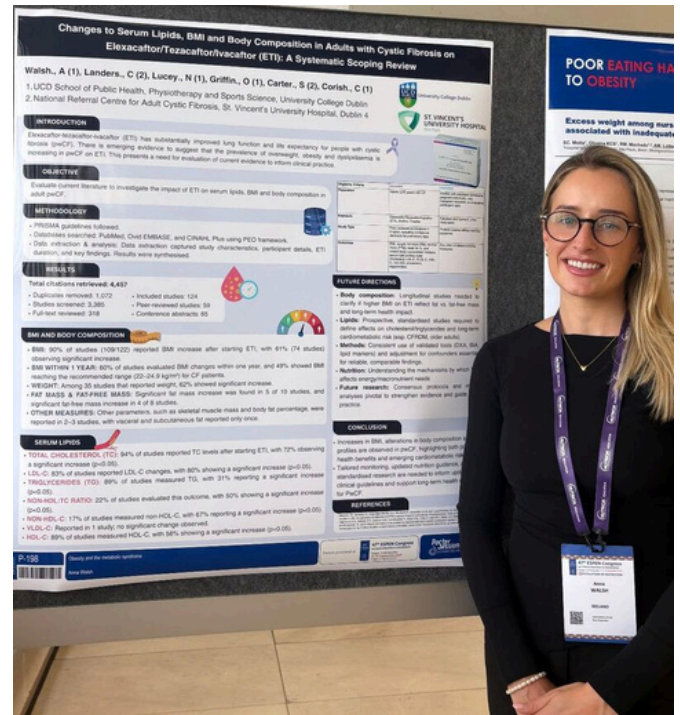
Pictured: Stage 3 HPS students testing an athletes sprint speed using the SmartSpeed gates in the High Performance Gym at UCD



European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism 2025

Anna Walsh presented her MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics dissertation project "Changes to Serum Lipids, BMI and Body Composition in Adults with Cystic Fibrosis (CF) on Elexacaftor/Tezacaftor/Ivacaftor (ETI): A Systematic Scoping Review" at the ESPEN (European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism) Conference in Prague in September. Some key findings from the research include:

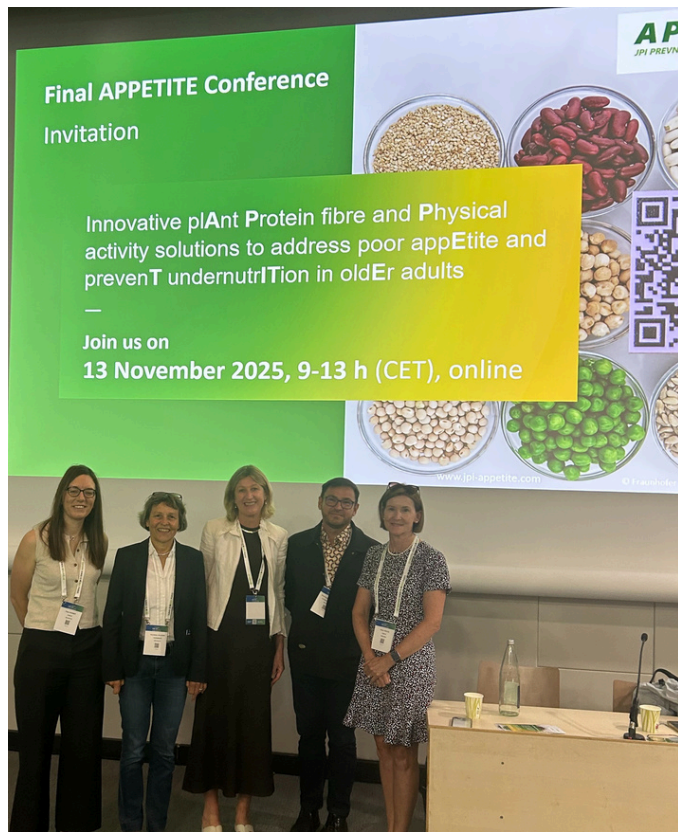
- 📈 90% of studies reported an increase in BMI after starting ETI, with over half showing statistically significant rises.
- ⚖️ Almost half of the studies measuring BMI within one year showed patients reaching the recommended CF BMI range (22–24.9 kg/m²).
- 🟡 Fat mass and fat-free mass increased in several studies, though data on visceral and subcutaneous fat were limited.
- 🔴 Significant increases were seen in total cholesterol (72%), LDL-C (80%), and HDL-C (56%), as well as in triglycerides and non-HDL markers.



Pictured: Anna Walsh

These findings highlight the need for tailored monitoring, updated nutrition guidance, and standardised research to inform clinical guidelines and support long-term health outcomes for people with CF on ETI.

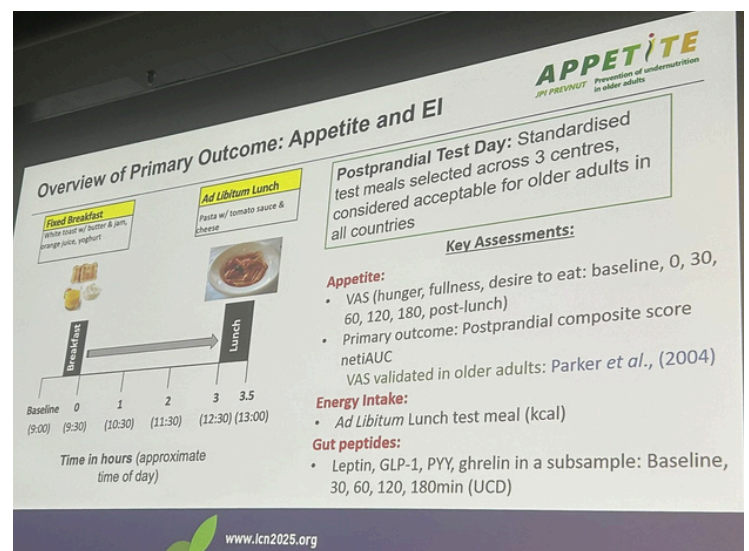
APPETITE Symposium IUNS-ICN, Paris, France



Pictured (l-r): Dr Katy Horner, Prof Dorothee Volkert, Professor Clare Corish, Dr Dominique Dardevet, Professor Helen Roche at the APPETITE Symposium, IUNS-ICN, Paris in July

The Joint Programming Initiative Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life HRB-funded APPETITE project held a scientific symposium at the [IUNS-ICN conference](#) in Paris on 25th August. Professor Clare Corish, Dr Katy Horner and Professor Helen Roche from UCD presented.

Professor Helen Roche also gave a special lecture on 26th August on Diet, Metabolism, and Immune Training and Sinead Mullin very ably chaired a scientific symposium.



International Health Promoting Campuses Conference

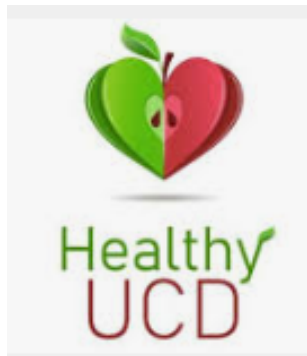
The International Health Promoting Campuses Conference took place at The University of Limerick on 16th-19th June 2025. The conference saw over 400 delegates from across the globe, including representatives from World Health Organization, UNESCO and International Union for Health Promotion and Education.

The Limerick Framework for Action was presented to national and international delegates and university leaders at the closing ceremony of the conference. The Framework reflects the changed realities faced by campuses in 2025, and takes cognisance of critical international developments, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is intended to support HEIs in developing comprehensive, robust approaches to embedding and furthering the healthy campus agenda.

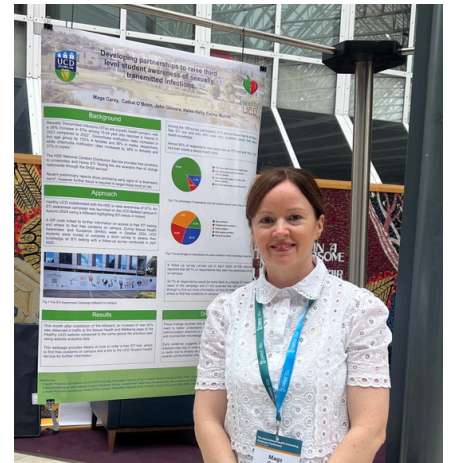
Healthy UCD was delighted to participate in the conference. Associate Professor Celine Murrin (Chair of the Healthy UCD Steering Committee) presented a flash talk on Healthy Eating Active Living entitled "Embedding an on-campus experiential health promotion learning opportunity benefits students learning and contributes to a health promoting campus". Mags Carey (Healthy UCD Health Promotion Coordinator) presented a poster on "Developing partnerships to raise third level student awareness of sexually transmitted infections".



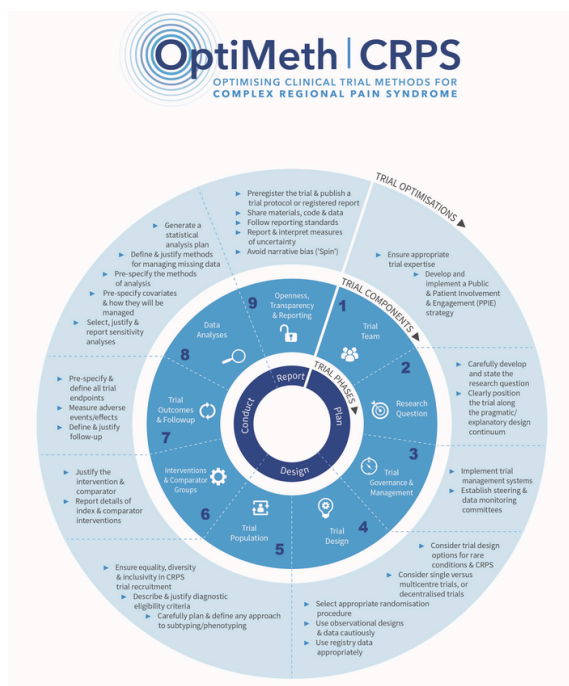
Pictured: The Irish Healthy Campus Network at the International Health Promoting Campuses Conference in UL in June 2025



Pictured: Mag Carey presenting a poster at IHPCC



OptiMeth-CRPS Methodological Framework Published



Pictured: The OptiMeth-CRPS methodological framework

The 'OptiMeth-CRPS methodological framework' has been published in [Pain Reports](#).

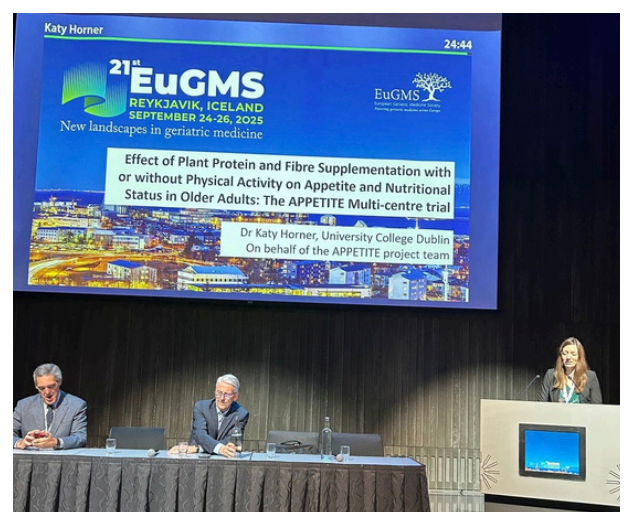
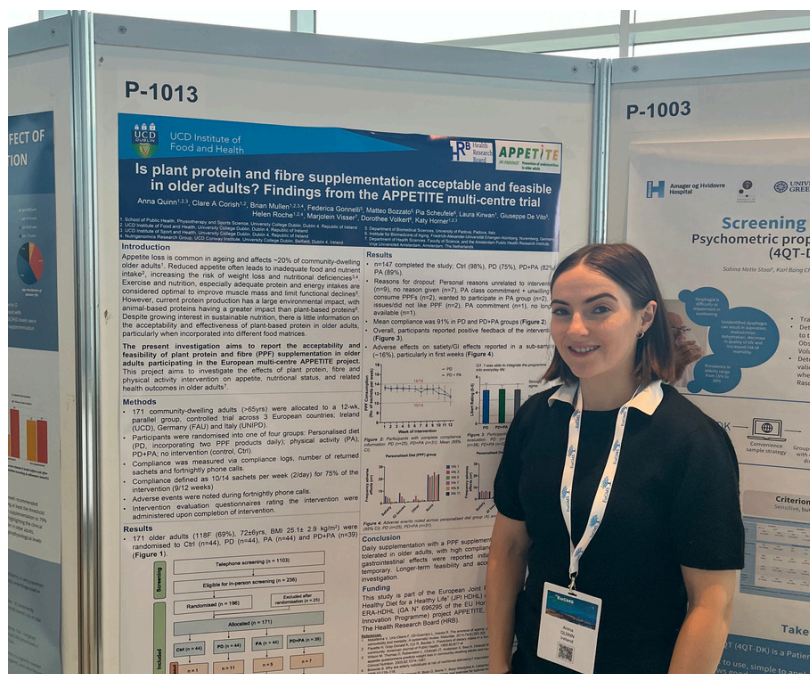
The OptiMeth-CRPS methodological framework describes a range of strategies for optimising the planning, design, conduct and reporting of clinical trials for complex regional pain syndrome as a rare pain condition.

The framework was developed by an international group of experts with lived experience, research and clinical expertise and led by Dr Keith Smart. It was funded through an ERA-NET NEURON Joint Transnational Networking Group Call "Networking Groups on Chronic Pain".

PhD Student Anna Quinn and Dr Katy Horner at European Geriatric Medicine Society Conference

Anna Quinn and Dr Katy Horner attended the 21st EuGMS Congress in Reykjavik in September. Anna presented a poster based on findings from the APPETITE multi-centre trial led by UCD titled: "Is Plant Protein and Fibre supplementation acceptable and feasible in older adults?"

Dr Katy Horner gave an invited presentation in the ESPEN joint symposium, presenting the main findings from the APPETITE trial on "The Effect of Plant protein and fibre supplementation with or without physical activity on appetite and nutritional status in older adults". She also presented and chaired a debate within the Abbott-sponsored symposium with leading experts in the field of malnutrition and sarcopenia, Professor Cruz-Jentoft and Professor Landi, on "Malnutrition and sarcopenia: clinical implications in aging populations".



SPHSS PhD student Anna Quinn and Dr Katy Horner at the 21st EuGMS Congress in Reykjavik, Iceland in September

Invited talk: British Society of Colposcopy & Cervical Pathology Course

Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick was invited to speak at the British Society of Colposcopy & Cervical Pathology Basic Course in Colposcopy, which was held at the National Maternity Hospital on the 16-17th of October 2025.

This two day course was interactive in nature, with discussions focussed on all aspects of colposcopy as well as basic epidemiology, cytology, histology, virology of HPV and other genital infections.

<https://www.bsccp.org.uk/events/basic-course-colposcopy>



Elephant in The Room

Healthy UCD is delighted to collaborate with Brent Pope and the Elephant in the Room Movement - raising awareness of Mental Health and Wellbeing in UCD. Mental Health and Wellbeing is one of the six wellbeing pillars as part of the Healthy Campus implementation.

The UCD elephant arrived on campus in early October and we did a vox pop with Brent asking the campus community the one thing they do to support their mental health. We will continue to collate these responses and will have a novel way to collate all of the answers!



Pictured: Members of the Healthy UCD Steering Committee with Brent Pope at the launch of the Elephant in the Room initiative in UCD

Fragility Fracture Network Congress in Porto, Portugal

UCD was strongly represented at the Fragility Fracture Network (FFN) Global Congress, held in Porto, Portugal, from 1–4 October 2025. The FFN Congress provided a multi-disciplinary platform to share research and innovation in fragility fracture care, bringing together international clinicians, researchers and policymakers dedicated to improving outcomes for individuals with fragility fractures.



Pictured: Workshop presenters and moderator Assoc Prof Caitriona Cunningham

Associate Professor Caitriona Cunningham moderated the "Virtual Care After Fragility Fractures," workshop, where PhD student, Catherine Fallon presented findings from the POWER RCT, sharing learnings on the online RT for older adults receiving supportive home care. Caitriona was also co-lead for a Vertebral Fragility Fracture workshop and presented on her work regarding education post Vertebral Fragility Fracture, Dr Niamh Merriman presented an "Overview of the HipCog" project, along with "A Scoping Review of Delirium and Cognitive Assessment in National Hip Fracture Registries" and "Diagnostic Accuracy of Delirium and Cognitive Assessments in the Hip Fracture Population". Dr Mary Walsh chaired the workshop "Hidden Burden of Fragility Fracture" and presented her work on the "HipFORGE" and "HipFORREST" projects. Both Niamh and Mary are the recipients of HRB Applying Research in Policy and Practice Fellowships, working with Professor Catherine Blake as UCD mentor and collaborating with the Irish National Hip Fracture Database.

Physiotherapy Graduate Recognition Ceremony

There was standing room only in Room C004 of the Health Sciences Building as UCD Physiotherapy celebrated its newest graduates at the annual Discipline Recognition Ceremony.

Following the UCD graduation and reception, over 250 Bachelor of Science and Professional Master's graduates gathered with their families, friends, and faculty to mark this major milestone in their academic journeys.

Dr Gráinne O'Donoghue, Associate Dean of Physiotherapy, opened the ceremony with a warm welcome and heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the School. She commended the graduates for their dedication, resilience, and commitment to excellence throughout their studies.



Pictured: Dr Grainne O'Donoghue, Associate Dean of Physiotherapy, UCD SPHPSS with Prize Winners

The celebration continued with the presentation of academic and clinical education awards, recognising outstanding achievements across multiple categories.

Class representatives Rachel Jameson (Professional Masters in Physiotherapy) and Hannah Johnson (BSc Physiotherapy) spoke on behalf of their classmates, sharing reflections on their time at UCD and expressing gratitude to the staff and clinical partners who supported their journey.



Pictured: The audience at the ceremony

One of the highlights was a nostalgic slideshow of UCard photographs from the students' first and final years, which prompted laughter and warm applause from the audience.

Closing the ceremony, Dr Sinéad McMahon, Director of Clinical Education, congratulated the graduates on their success and reflected on their clinical education journey — acknowledging how far they have come and the bright futures that await them as physiotherapy professionals.



Pictured: Dr Sinead McMahon, Director of Clinical Education, UCD SPHPSS addresses the audience

UCD School of Medicine Translational Medicine Seed Funding 2025

Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick is co-applicant on UCD School of Medicine Translational Medicine Seed Funding 2025. The PI is Prof Walter Cullen, School of Medicine, and the topic is on health needs assessment in primary and secondary care.

Breaking Barriers in Sports Medicine

Professor Kate Pumpa presented at the World Federation of Athletic Therapy and Training conference as part of a panel entitled "Breaking Barriers: Navigating a Career in Sport and Exercise Medicine as a Woman" in Maynooth on the 18th of October.

Kate along with Aoife Burke, Siobhan O'Connor, Julianne Ryan, Laurie Ryan, Jennifer Pugh, Isabel Grondin and Aoife Lane presented to a packed room on navigating careers and overcoming barriers working in sport.



Report by Dr Julie Broderick Launched and Published by the National Disability Authority



Congratulations to Dr Julie Broderick for the recent launch and publication by the National Disability Authority of her report: "An Exploration of the Scale and Impact of Physical Disability in People Experiencing Homelessness in Ireland".

The link to this report can be found [here](#).

EU-invited Speaker: Dr Mary O'Keeffe

SIP Event: From Burden to Prevention: Reframing Chronic Pain in EU Health Policy

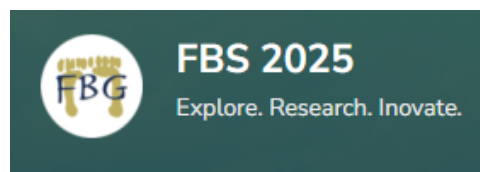
Jul 10, 2025 | Advocacy, SIP News



Physiotherapy lecturer and researcher Dr Mary O'Keeffe was an invited speaker at a [European Union](#) parliament event on 16th October, organised by the Societal Impact of Pain (SIP) platform, on the prevention of chronic pain.

SPHPSS Biomechanists in Scandinavia

In late July, SPHPSS researchers were Scandinavia-bound for the Footwear Biomechanics Group satellite meeting in Oslo, Norway and the 30th Congress of the International Society of Biomechanics in Stockholm, Sweden.



Dr Laura-Anne Furlong attended the Footwear Biomechanics Group meeting at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, presenting some of her research in muscle and tendon mechanics during running. Her presentations focused on 'Evaluation of a surrogate method of estimating calcaneal insertion position during running and effects on calculated Achilles tendon mechanics' and 'The effects of cushioning on soft tissue energy during jogging and running'. She was a recipient of a Nike travel award to support attendance at the meeting, and was also invited to chair a podium session and assist with the student mentor programme.

Next stop was Stockholm for the five day ISB congress, where she was joined by Dr Muhammad Shahid. Stockholm certainly didn't disappoint, with the opening banquet held in the Stockholm City Hall – the venue of the Nobel Prize Banquet – and a stunning conference location right on the waterfront. Dr Furlong presented on 'A comparison of overground sprint kinematics of elite cerebral palsy and able-bodied athletes' in addition to session chairing. Dr. Shahid presented part of his current postdoctoral research with Prof. Brian Caulfield on 'Optimizing monocular camera perspectives for accurate 3D human pose estimation'.

A nice surprise on the final day was that a UCD SPHPSS graduate was the winner of the Carlo de Luca Emerging Scientist Award for excellence in early career research in motor control and electromyography. Dr David O'Reilly presented a keynote on 'Towards mechanistically insightful precision motor assessments: the network-information framework'; he graduated from the Sport & Exercise Management programme in 2016 prior to completing his PhD in computational neuroscience at University of Leeds, where he is currently based.

An excellent trip all around for UCD with plenty of opportunities for feedback, networking and Fika.



Pictured: Team UCD at ISB: Drs Furlong and Shahid with Dr David Muñoz (School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

Graduate Programmes: Apply Now

The UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science offers a wide range of graduate programmes across all of our disciplines and at various levels.

Courses range from short-term Certificates to part-time Professional to two-year full-time Masters programmes.

Full information, including application requirements and deadlines, are available [here](#). International students can find more information about studying at UCD [here](#).



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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30th Congress of the International Society of Biomechanics, Stockholm, Sweden, 27-31 July 2025

Shahid, M, Argent, R, Ifrim, G and Caulfield, B: Optimizing monocular camera perspectives for accurate 3D human pose estimation [Poster presentation]

Furlong, LAM, Hamill, J, Hassan, S and van Emmerik, REA: A comparison of overground sprint kinematics of elite cerebral palsy and able-bodied athletes [Oral presentation]

Voukelatos, D, Furlong, LAM, Pain, MTG: Energy dissipation due to thigh and shank soft tissue motion during drop landings performed from two heights using two different landing techniques [Oral presentation]

Wang, Y, Blenkinsop, GM, Allen, SJ, Voukelatos, D, Furlong, LAM, Matthews, SM and Pain, MTG: Lower limb inertia parameter changes during the swing and ground contact phases at different running velocities [Poster presentation]

Pain, MTG, Blenkinsop, GM, Allen, SJ, Furlong, LAM, Wang, Y, Matthews, SM and Voukelatos, D: Energy dissipation due to soft tissue motion during drop landings from four different heights in female athletes [Poster presentation]

Matthews, S, Blenkinsop, G, Allen, SJ, Voukelatos, D, Furlong, LAM, Wang, Y and Pain, MTG: 'Soft tissue motion increasingly impacts the calculation of lower limb inertial parameters as running speed increases [Poster presentation]

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