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## **31 Health Charities call on Government to Prioritise Medical Research in Ireland Medical research helps patients, the health system and the economy**

An umbrella group of **31 medical research and patient support charities** representing the interests of over 1 million patients, who have co-funded medical research to the tune of **€60 million**, is today calling on the Government to urgently prioritise health/medical research in Ireland. The Medical Research Charities Group (MRCG) is a critical player in health research in Ireland, and believes that investment in health research plays a key role in treating disease and delivering a better healthcare system.

In their Pre-Budget Submission 2013 the charities specifically call for:

- Continued support of the **MRCG/Health Research Board (HRB) Joint Funding Scheme** at the existing levels of funding. This scheme provides vital funding for health research in Ireland and represents good value for money since patient medical charities provide 50% of funding for this scheme.
- **Improved support structures** for medical research, in particular the appointment of a full time **Director of Research within the Health Service**. This post is particularly needed now to deliver Government policy on health research and to ensure that Ireland retains the highest calibre of health researchers going forward. We also call for a strategy on **Patient Data** and its role in terms of research.
- The development of a robust and effective **National Action Plan on Rare Diseases** must be prioritised by the Government in the forthcoming budget. Such a plan is required before the end of 2013 and is an EU wide obligation. Patient groups/medical charities will not accept a 'virtual plan' on rare diseases.

"In a time of recession health research should be a key area for investment by the Government, to first and foremost assist patients, while at

the same time benefitting the smart economy through the creation of jobs and the development of expertise. The MRCG/HRB Joint Funding Scheme is of huge importance to our members and we are calling on the Government to recognise the significance of this scheme and the vital role the HRB plays in supporting medical research in Ireland," said Philip Watt, Chairperson of the Medical Research Charities Group and CEO, Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland, speaking at the launch of the MRCG's pre-Budget Submission in Dublin City this morning.

Research must be embedded in the health system. Other countries have shown that a good research culture leads to better health outcomes for patients. Likewise the health system should be a good place to carry out clinical research and there must be good practices and policies to support this, for example; allocating protected time to medical scientists in hospital laboratories to carry out research. "There are a lot of indications that highly qualified researchers are choosing to leave Ireland because of the lack of investment in research and the lack of protected time for research among clinicians. This is a most serious situation for Ireland's medical research agenda and will have a huge impact on medical research in general as well as a significant impact on the future of our third level education system," said Professor Gerry McElvaney, Director of the Respiratory Research Laboratory at RCSI/ Beaumont Hospital, who presented at the launch this morning.

Founded in 1998, the MRCG's mission is to support the medical research environment in Ireland. This is achieved by partnership with external organisations; advocacy to enable change; a forum to promote education and integration; and the provision of direct services to members.

For further information and a copy of the MRCG's Pre Budget Submission 2013 please contact:

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**About the MRCG**

The Medical Research Charities Group (MRCG) is an umbrella group of 33 charities that seeks to generate dynamic medical research in Ireland, driving a greater understanding of how illness can be prevented, how it can be diagnosed earlier and treated more effectively with the ultimate goal of improving the nation's health.

Founded in 1998, the goals of the MRCG are to increase funding for medical research, remove the barriers to medical research, increase the profile of medical research in Ireland and provide the services and supports our members require.

Research discoveries are central to achieving the goal of extending healthy lives. Research into the cause of diseases, methods for prevention, techniques for diagnosis, and new approaches to treatment have increased life expectancy, reduced infant mortality, limited the toll of infectious diseases, and improved outcomes for patients with all forms of chronic diseases. It is a recognised fact that patient orientated clinical research tests new ideas and makes rapid medical progress possible.

**Members:**

Alpha One Foundation	DEBRA Ireland	Research & Education Foundation:
Alzheimer Society of Ireland	Diabetes Ireland	Sligo General Hospital
Arthritis Ireland	Research Alliance	Royal Victoria Eye and
Asthma Society of Ireland	Duchenne Ireland	Ear Research Foundation
Bee for Battens:	Fighting Blindness	Rutland Centre
The Saoirse Foundation	Heart Children Ireland	Sightsavers International (Ireland)
Brainwave: The Irish	Irish Cancer Society	The Cystic Fibrosis
Epilepsy Association	Irish Heart Foundation	Association of Ireland
Children's Fund for Health:	Irish Thoracic Society	The Mater Foundation
Temple Street Hospital	MS Ireland	St John of God Research
Children's Leukaemia	Muscular Dystrophy Ireland	Foundation
Research Project	Parkinson's Association	St Patrick's Hospital Foundation
Children's Medical & Research	of Ireland	St Vincents Anaesthesia Foundation
Foundation: Crumlin Hospital	Raynauds and Scleroderma Ireland	
Cystinosis Foundation Ireland		

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