



Health Research
Charities Ireland

A Brief History of the MRCG (now HRCI)

hrci.ie

 @hrcireland

About the MRCG

A Brief History

October 2017

Who we are

The Medical Research Charities Group (MRCG), is the national organisation of charities in Ireland active in medical research. The MRCG promotes dynamic medical research across the full spectrum of the research continuum, seeking a greater understanding of how illness can be prevented, diagnosed earlier and treated more effectively.

How it Began

The founding members of the MRCG came together in 1998 to discuss and determine how the medical research charities in Ireland could work together more effectively. These founders were

- Fighting Blindness,
- The Irish Cancer Society,
- The Irish Heart Foundation,
- Alpha One Foundation,
- Children's Medical and Research Foundation, Crumlin, and
- DEBRA Ireland.

Each of these organisations is still represented on the MRCG. The organisation now boasts 38 members.

The Joint Funding Scheme

One of the original aims of the MRCG was to secure statutory funding for medical research, and after much lobbying of the Dept of Health, this was approved in 2006 and has since operated through a joint funding scheme with the Health Research Board (HRB). Under this scheme, 50% of the cost of a successful research programme is awarded by the HRB with the balance of the funds being paid by the sponsoring charity. This innovative scheme allows members of the MRCG to support research of particular interest to that patient population, where they might otherwise not be in a position to finance the full cost of that research. Currently €1.6million is allocated every 2 years by the HRB – with another €1.6 million provided as matched funding by the charities.

Some interesting stats on the Joint Funding Scheme

- Since its inception in 2006, eight rounds of funding have taken place with a total of **111 projects funded**.
- These 111 projects received approx. € 10.7 million funding from government (through the HRB) which equates to a **total spend of €21.4 million on charity led research** (including charity matched funding).

Organisational Sustainability

In 1998, the MRCG had 1 part-time staff member who provided secretariat services to the board. Since that time, the organisation has achieved more stable and sustainable multiannual funding from the Pobal SSNO scheme, the HRB, and also a 5% levy on members on the value of research awards received from the HRB. This has allowed the MRCG to grow to 4 part-time staff members including a CEO.

Key activities and achievements

The MRCG provides training and education opportunities as well as a strong support network for all charity members. The MRCG continuously work to have positive relationships with key policy makers and stakeholders and we lobby for improved research policies and institutions. We work with our members to improve their research capacity and identify ways for our members to engage with research opportunities at a national and international level.

The MRCG has set up working groups – driven by the prevailing research climate and member needs – on the subjects of Intellectual Property, Patient Registries, Rare Diseases, Communications and Advocacy. We have run workshops on subjects including Peer Review & Medical / Scientific Advisory Boards; Science for non-Scientists; Grant Financial Management; Patient Registries, Intellectual Property and Public and Patient Involvement in Research (PPI). Some of our communications focused workshops have been

- Generating Media Coverage for Research
- How to Conduct a Media Interview
- Writing and Issuing a Press Release
- Social Media Training

The MRCG commissioned a report on patient registers in Ireland, led by a working group of the MRCG, HRB, HSE and HIQA

In 2014, the MRCG also commissioned a report on the Research Landscape in Ireland. This led to the formation of the Irish Health Research Forum – a partnership of organisations and stakeholders aiming to influence health research in Ireland.

The MRCG is also represented on the current Department of Health Rare Disease National Plan Oversight Committee working to implement a National Plan for Rare Diseases in Ireland.

MRCG membership is open to all charities in Ireland with an interest in medical research or beginning a research programme.