

## PRESS RELEASE

### **33 health charities set priorities for the State to deliver a well functioning, less fragmented health research infrastructure to ultimately improve the nation's health**

**- 53% of general public want continuing State investment in health research during difficult economic times -**

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011** - Charities which drive health research want Ireland to move away from valuable but fragmented health research activity and operate within a more integrated and focused infrastructure to ensure that all breakthroughs translate into improvements in human health. Marking the publication of their 2012 pre-Budget submission, the Medical Research Charities Group (MRCG) set down three priorities to removing the barriers to having this kind of infrastructure and will advocate for their implementation largely through Government and HSE channels. These three priorities are as follows;

- Ensuring priority investment for health research to deliver patient care, public health service transformation and economic and enterprise development
- The need for better channels of engagement between the health research community and the HSE
- Maintaining investment in health research and protecting against stealth cuts

Speaking at the publication of the pre-Budget Submission, John McCormack, Chairperson, MRCG and CEO, Irish Cancer Society said "Advances in health research enable more understanding of how illness can be prevented, detected earlier and treated more effectively. It is therefore vital that we have a better health research infrastructure where these advances can be made so we have better public health, improved patient care and a transformed health system and where Ireland emerges as a global leader in the delivery of patient-centred healthcare."

In delivering on these priorities, the MRCG calls upon the Government to;

- fill the research leader post (Assistant Secretary) in the Department of Health
- invest in Clinical Research Facilities (CRFs) on hospital campuses. A CRF provides the infrastructure, including the physical space, facilities and experts, needed to support patient-focused research studies
- promote the development of a pipeline of highly-skilled clinical investigators
- establish an integrated regulatory and ethics system in Ireland for the conduct of health research
- ensure that funding for health research projects in State agencies is not impacted by the hidden cut of the pension levy and that available core funding is not reduced

Furthermore and in order to embed research within the health services, the MRCG calls on the HSE to;

- appoint a full time Director of Research in the HSE to sit at executive level
- implement the relevant infrastructure and policies in the HSE to support health research under the aegis of the new Director of Research
- take a leadership role in incentivising and supporting clinicians and hospitals to carry out more health research
- promote positive health research case studies to enhance Ireland's reputation in this area and raise awareness of the impact of health research among health practitioners.

In preparation for making this submission and in order to strengthen its case, the MRCG recently commissioned research amongst the general public (x 1010 respondents aged 18

years+) to assess understanding and commitment to health research. The results as follows show that the public sees the value of health research, supports State funding of research and is interested in participating in health research;

- The majority (51%) of the population state that the Government should be the principle funder of health research
- 78% of the population agree strongly that health research is important for developing new treatments
- 54% agree strongly that health research is important for strengthening our reputation abroad
- 53% agree strongly that the State should maintain its investment in health research during difficult economic times
- Attitudes to participation in health research vary greatly depending on the area of health research that people are asked to participate (e.g. 72% of respondents said that they would donate blood for examination and 55% said that they would donate tissue post surgery for examination.
- 35% of the population would prefer that money they donate to charity would be spent on health research.

“We call on the Government and HSE to acknowledge public understanding and commitment to health research and to review our priorities and deliver a well functioning, less fragmented health research infrastructure to ultimately improve the nation’s health” concluded John McCormack.

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For further information and a copy of the MRCG 2012 pre-Budget Submission, please contact Jane Curtin, Tel.: 087 938 0779