**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, 11th January 2021**

**The Alzheimer Society of Ireland hosting free online workshop on how social robots can be used in dementia care – now and in the future**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, in collaboration with ***NUI Galway and IT Sligo***, is hosting a free online workshop to discover how ***social robots*** are being used in dementia care and will explore how they may be used in future care models in Ireland.

The online workshop, ***'Using Social Robots in Dementia Care - Current Challenges and Future Possibilities'***, will be held via Zoom on ***Wednesday, 20th January 2021*** (9.30am-2.30pm).

The workshop will be of interest to social carers, family or informal carers looking after somebody with dementia, as well as healthcare policy makers and technologists working in this field.

The session also aims to ignite a discussion where participants can share their experiences and views in relation to how we may use social robots in dementia care in the future and what they see as potential benefits and risks of increasing use of such robots.

Members of the public can get their ***FREE ticket on the Eventbrite page***. Please register by Friday, 15th January 2021 [insert hyperlink to https://tinyurl.com/y5gt59nd]

The population of Europe is ageing rapidly, thus, the number of people who will be diagnosed with dementia is going to increase over the coming years.

In Ireland, there are almost ***64,000 people*** with dementia in Ireland and for every one person with dementia three others are directly affected. The number of people with dementia will rise to ***113,000*** within the next 20 years.

It is now necessary to explore various care models including the potential of using social robots to support people living with dementia. Given the current ***Covid-19 pandemic***, this workshop is more timely and relevant than ever before.

This workshop is funded by ***Erasmus+*** Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education. This workshop is part of the Erasmus+ funded ***Prospero project*** and one of the key aims of Prospero is to examine and devise new ways of teaching future care professionals about how social robots can be used.

The ASI brought the social robot, ***Paro***, to Ireland for the first time in 2018 to help with the delivery of person-centred care at our Orchard Day Care Centre in Blackrock, Co Dublin. Paro is an advanced interactive therapeutic robot and registered medical device. Paro is proven to reduce stress, increase socialisation, stimulate interaction and improve relaxation and motivation for people with dementia.

***Manager of The ASI’s Orchard Day Care Centre Mary Hickey said:*** *“The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is delighted to be taking part in this exciting workshop alongside NUI Galway and Sligo IT. The introduction of social robotics to The Orchard Daycare centre has helped us to explore the effects of new and innovative technology to support our service delivery. We discovered that Paro and other robotic devices can offer real psychological support and companionship to some of our clients and we really look forward to sharing our experience of social robotics in a daycare setting as well as exploring their possible future uses in these challenging times for service delivery.”*

**ENDS**

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**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

***About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI):***The ASI is the national leader in understanding and providing dementia-specific supports and services. With a national network of over 120 specialist services, 900 staff and 300 volunteers, each year they provide almost 900,000 hours of community-based, dementia-specific care throughout Ireland. For more information see [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

***Prospero Project:***

This workshop is part of the Erasmus+ funded Prospero project and one of the key aims of Prospero is to examine and devise new ways of teaching future care professionals about how social robots can be used. The Prospero project partners include third-level education institutes in; Ireland (Institute of Technology Sligo, National University of Ireland Galway), Denmark (VIA University), Spain (Valencia University), The Netherlands (University of Twente) and Poland (University of Lower Silesia). It also comprises of two partners with experience of using social robots in care settings, within Ireland (The ASI) and Denmark (Municipality of Holstebro).

***Alzheimer National Helpline:***

For more information on our supports and services during this challenging time, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline where you can now also book in a 1:1 session with a Dementia Nurse or Dementia Adviser. The Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341. Email at helpline@alzheimer.ie or via Live Chat at [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

**ABOUT DEMENTIA**

* There are 64,000 people with dementia in Ireland and the number of people with the condition will more than double in the next 25 years to over 150,000 by 2045.\*
* There are 11,000 new cases of dementia in Ireland each year. That’s at least 30 people every day and anyone can get dementia - even people in their 30s/40s/50s.\*\*
* Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause changes and damage to the brain.
* Dementia is progressive. There is currently no cure. Dementia is not simply a health issue but a social issue that requires a community response.
* The majority of people with dementia (63%) live at home in the community. Over 180,000 people in Ireland are currently or have been carers for a family member or partner with dementia with many more providing support and care in other ways.
* 1 in 10 people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland are under 65.
* The overall cost of dementia care in Ireland is just over €1.69 billion per annum; 48% of this is attributable to family care; 43% is accounted for by residential care; formal health and social care services contribute only 9% to the total cost.

*Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*

*\*Figure referenced from Alzheimer Europe (2020) Dementia in Europe Yearbook 2019 ‘Estimating the prevalence of dementia in Europe’*

*\*\*Figure referenced from Pierce, T., O’Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland.*