

ASI Research Newsletter

Winter / End of Year 2024



THE Alzheimer
SOCIETY OF IRELAND

Welcome to our final newsletter of 2024!

We would like to extend our warmest wishes to those who are celebrating Christmas, Chanukah or Kwanzaa a happy one and those who might celebrate in other ways a joyous one.



Research Roundup

Dementia Research Network Ireland and The ASI hosted a Science of Dementia for the Non Scientist Event

In September, The ASI & DRNI co-hosted a knowledge exchange seminar which brought together clinicians, academics, family carers and people living with dementia. We had a stellar line-up of speakers, include DRNI lead Prof Seán Kennelly and Prof Ian Robertson who gave the keynote presentation. We were also thrilled to have a panel discussion featuring those with the lived experience.



Thank you to all who attended, who presented and who took the time to share their experiences. DRNI and The ASI were able to co-host this event with thanks to the Health Research Board Events and Conferences Sponsorship Scheme.

Breaking Down Research: Dementia Dialogues Series

The screenshot shows a webinar interface. The main slide is titled "Memory and Place" and includes the bullet point: "Idea of 'place' as a powerful memory cue...". Below the text is a photograph of a Dunnes Stores supermarket. The webinar is titled "Dementia Dialogues: Breaking Down Research Webinar --- Walking Reminiscence Interventions" and features the Maynooth University logo. A smaller inset slide titled "Disease Modifying Therapies - Dementia Dialogues: Breaking Down Research Webinar" shows a line graph titled "Dementia Cases in Ireland" with the y-axis labeled "Prevalence" and the x-axis labeled "Year". The graph shows an upward trend from 1980 to 2020. To the right of the graph, text states: "1:3 people born in the UK from 2015 onwards will develop dementia in their lifetime", "Irish Independent", "Babies born in Ireland today will have an average life expectancy of 105 years", and "Tallaght University Hospital". At the bottom of the inset slide, it says: "Currently 65,000 people with dementia in Ireland" and "1:13 people aged 65+ in Ireland are living with dementia". A small video feed of a presenter is visible in the bottom right corner.

In September, we launched our four-part Dementia Research Webinar Series. The aim of this series is to break down emerging research in plain language for a national audience. We are thrilled to have just finished part three of the series, with the final part taking place at the end of January 2025. Thank you to everyone for your support so far, and a special thank you to all our collaborators and presenters. You can watch back previous sessions on our website.

Funding & Collaborations

In 2024 we continued to collaborate with research teams across the country. We partnered with universities and organisations to strengthen the work that we do collectively and produce high-quality, dementia research.

This included supporting applications to the IRC New Foundations scheme and the HRCI/HRB Joint Funding Scheme. One applicant that we supported under the HRCI/HRB JFS was successfully awarded funding.

The INNEACH project, led by Dr Catherine Houghton from the School of Nursing and Midwifery at The University of Galway has been awarded funding for their project which will focus on intergenerational programmes to enhance social connectivity for those living with dementia. This 24-month initiative promises to make a significant impact on the lives of individuals and families across Ireland.

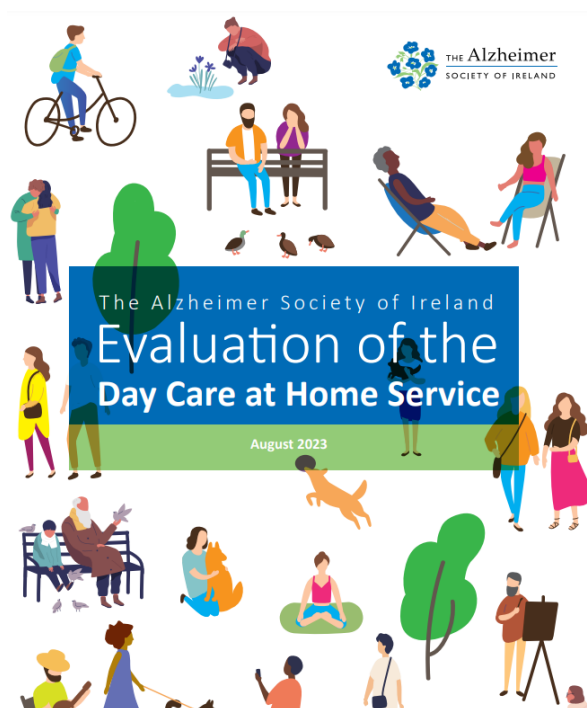
HRCI Research Impact Award 2024



We were thrilled to attend the recent HRCI Joint Funding Scheme celebration event that took place in the Mansion House in Dublin.

A sincere congratulations to Prof Mary McCarron from Trinity College Dublin who was this years' recipient of the HRCI Research Impact Award. ASI Board Member Ann Twomey presented Prof McCarron the award, and was joined by her team. In 2020 The ASI supported the HRB/HRCI Joint Funding Scheme project by Prof McCarron and the team at Trinity Centre for Ageing and ID which focused on producing Post-Diagnostic Dementia Support Guidelines for People with an Intellectual Disability.

Evaluation of The ASI's Day Care at Home Service



In late January, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland launched the evaluation report of our Day Care at Home service, which highlights life-enhancing benefits for people living with dementia and their families.

This piece of work was commissioned by The ASI and undertaken by Dr Emma O'Shea, Ms Mary Flaherty, Ms Laura Somers and Professor Suzanne Timmons from the Centre for Gerontology and Rehabilitation at University College Cork. This work was kindly funded by The HSE's National Dementia Services.

Minister Mary Butler, Minister for Older People and Mental Health launched the evaluation report with our staff, teams and colleagues.

You can read this report on our website, www.alzheimer.ie.

Disease Modifying Therapies and Blood Based Biomarkers

2024 was a busy year with the announcement of potential disease-modifying therapies, including the publication of clinical trial data and FDA / EMA review of drugs including Leqembi (Lecanemab) and Kisunla (Donanemab) amongst others.

In November we saw the European Medicines Agency give a positive opinion on the marketing authorisation for Leqembi for treatment for early stage Alzheimer's disease. This positive step brings us closer to seeing Disease Modifying Therapies for early-stage Alzheimer's Disease becoming available in the European Union, and we are optimistic that the European Commission will follow the EMA's recommendation. If approved, this will mark the first Disease Modifying Therapy for Alzheimer's Disease approved in the EU, and the significance of this cannot be underestimated.

Leqembi will only be suitable for a relatively small number of people who are in the very early stages of Alzheimer's Disease. There are many for whom this drug will not be suitable, including those living with other types of dementia. The ASI will continue to support and advocate for people with dementia and their families so they can live as well as possible for as long as possible.

This year we also saw a greater discussion and emerging research around the use of blood-based biomarkers to detect amyloid that builds up in the brain of individuals with Alzheimer's Disease. Dr Adam Dyer from Tallaght University Hospital (TUH) is a lead investigator on a study that demonstrated that it is possible to use a blood test to detect amyloid plaques in the brains of people with early Alzheimer's Disease. Prof Seán Kennelly, Lead Investigator and Director of the Institute of Memory and Cognition at TUH has also stated that there is strong evidence for the use of blood-based biomarkers in detecting Alzheimer's Disease. Read more about this on our website.

TeamUp for Dementia Research Service Evaluation



The TeamUp for Dementia Research service connects people living with dementia and informal carers (i.e. family members and friends) with opportunities to take part in ethically approved dementia research.

Established in July 2021, the service makes research participation accessible and provides a safe and supported way for members to consider research participation opportunities. It currently has over 350 members and in 2024 it supported ~15 projects.

An in-depth evaluation of the service will now be carried out. Please note, if you are a TeamUp for Dementia Research member or used this service for recruitment for your research, you may be contacted to engage in this work via survey or interview by the Evaluation Team. As always, participation is voluntary and choosing not to take part will not impact future research opportunities.

Events Attended

#TeamASI were incredibly busy attending events this year. Here are some photos from all the great events!



SNAPSHOT OF 2024 EVENTS

And finally...

We would like to wish all our extended research collaborators and partners a very Happy New Year!

We hope to continue to engage and work together in 2025!