



Annual Review 2021





Our Staff Health & Wellbeing Centre opened in University Hospital Limerick (UHL) on the 03 of September. This is a new facility for staff to take part in exercise classes, freshen up before work or just have a quiet moment to reflect.

Pictured (l to r) Aisling O'Carroll, Health Promotion and Improvement Officer, UL Hospitals Group, Sarah McCormack, National Healthy Ireland Lead and HSE National lead for Staff Health and Wellbeing, Prof Colette Cowan, CEO, Suzanne Dunne, Head of Strategy, UL Hospitals Group and Eimear Laffan Health and Wellbeing Lead, UL Hospitals Group.

Front Cover:

The front cover features a series of images with members of our staff and our community during 2021.

Photo credits:

Brian Arthur Photography, Alan Place Photography, Keith Wiseman Photography, ULHG Communications Department.

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CEO Overview

In an extraordinary year for our health services, our main focus was on continuing to provide safe care in a COVID-19 environment and in the face of a significant surge in emergency demand.

The year began in the midst of the third and most protracted wave of the pandemic, one that tested the resilience of staff, patients and our wider community. We can all be proud of how we stood up to this test. COVID-19 mortality rates in Ireland are among the lowest in the OECD. But we must also recognise the enormous sacrifices made across society and plan for the long tail of COVID-19 already evident through increased morbidity, delayed care and fatigue across the workforce.

A record 76,500 patients attended our Emergency Department in 2021, an increase of 16%. Attendances at Ennis, Nenagh and St John's Injury Units returned to pre-pandemic levels. Our model 2 hospitals also saw a significant increase in activity across our medical assessment units.

The number of babies delivered at University Maternity Hospital Limerick increased by 3%. Capital investment at Croom Orthopaedic Hospital saw an expansion of the volume and range of procedures. Outpatient attendances across the Group grew by 6% in 2021 and we saw no significant increase in the OPD waiting lists. This was achieved through an increase in virtual appointments and judicious use of government initiatives to reduce waiting lists. By year-end, our vaccination teams had delivered over 465,000 COVID-19 doses at our vaccination centres, in residential care settings, to inpatients and others. All this increased activity was underpinned by the growth in the numbers employed by UL Hospitals Group by over 1,200 over the course of the year.

Despite considerable investment in our bed stock and staffing resources, demand for unscheduled care continues to outpace capacity. This is the main contributing factor in continuing long wait times in our Emergency Department. Improving patient experience remains a key focus.

As well as investing more, we must invest smartly; and we continue to assess processes and to do things differently. Progress has been made on integrated care pathways and hospital avoidance for the frail elderly. Under the Sláintecare reforms, our colleagues in HSE Mid West Community Healthcare established the Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons in 2021 and we expect to see its impact grow. In November, the Frailty at the Front Door service commenced in our ED. This will complement the work of teams such as OPTIMEND, allied health professionals who in 2021 safely discharged over two thirds of the over 800 elderly patients they assessed in ED.

Demand for unscheduled care and the ongoing disruptions due to COVID-19 adversely impacted scheduled care during 2021. Day case activity reduced across our model 2 hospitals. In UHL, 83% of bed nights were accounted for by emergency admissions and 574 theatre lists were cancelled. We will continue to make use of the various government initiatives announced in late 2021 to catch up on scheduled care. However, the reliance on outsourcing is not sustainable in the long-term, either financially or in the expectation that our patients should continue to travel outside of the region. I fully support the call from senior surgeons for an elective hospital for the MidWest.

The cruel cyber attack that threatened to paralyse services on 14 May brought out the best in a workforce that was already low on reserves. The ICT teams who worked with clinical staff on the workarounds to keep essential services going minimised the impact on patients of this emergency within an emergency.

These workarounds only succeeded because of the ingenuity, the adaptability and the goodwill of staff. I was proud to be associated with staff such as the porters who took on a huge volume of additional work to run paper reports; or the laboratory staff who worked over the weekends to hand-write blood results.

The Health and Wellbeing Centre we opened at UHL in September recognises that we need to mind our staff. While we welcomed back retirees to respond to the pandemic, we have also seen a wave of retirements and migration to community services. This significant loss of expertise and corporate memory reflects national policy but also the huge pressure on hospital staff. As an organization, we will continue to respond to this. We will support staff who remain unwell because of COVID-19 and we remember the colleagues we have lost.

The lessons we have learned over the course of the emergency will stand to us as we restore normal levels of activity, develop new services, advance the Sláintecare reforms and refocus on our strategic objectives.



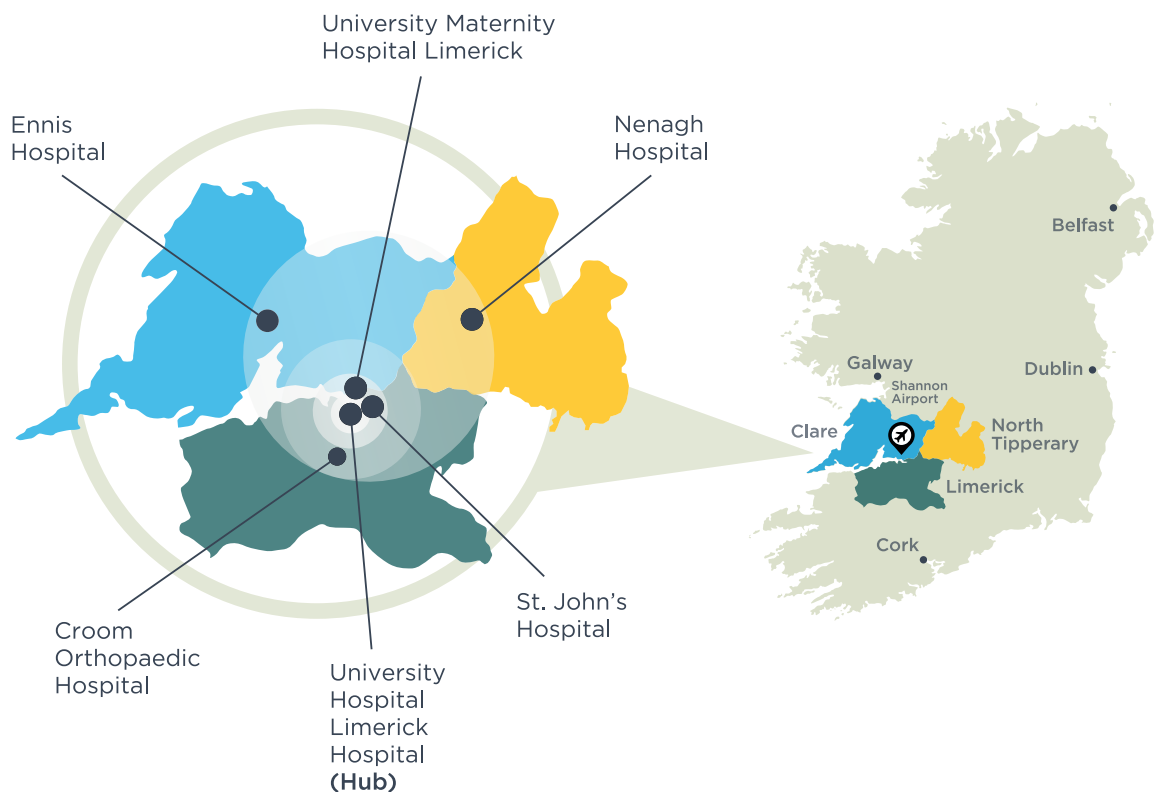
Colette Cowan
CEO
UL Hospitals Group

About UL Hospitals Group

UL Hospitals Group comprises six different hospital sites in the Midwest of Ireland (Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary).

- University Hospital Limerick (UHL)
- University Maternity Hospital Limerick (UMHL)
- Nenagh Hospital
- Ennis Hospital
- Croom Orthopaedic Hospital
- St. John's Hospital (Voluntary)

Operating on a hub-and-spoke system, the centralised critical care facilities at UHL are supported by Model 2 and Model 2S (Specialist) hospitals. We operate on this basis to achieve economies of scale, to allow for a more streamlined and specialised regional service, and to ensure people can still be treated as close to home as possible. Together, these hospitals deliver a range of crucial services and provide a robust, comprehensive healthcare network for our patients across the Midwest.



Academic Partner

Our academic partner is the University of Limerick (UL). Our relationship with UL is important in improving standards of care, fostering education, clinical research and innovation.

The Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC) at UHL provides first class training facilities. It is home to UL's graduate entry medical school as well as the educational and research needs of our hospital staff.

The Health Sciences Academy, based in CERC is a partnership between UL, ULHG and HSE Midwest Community Healthcare. Its primary aim is to improve health and wellbeing for people in the Midwest.



University of Limerick



Clinical Education and Research Centre, UHL

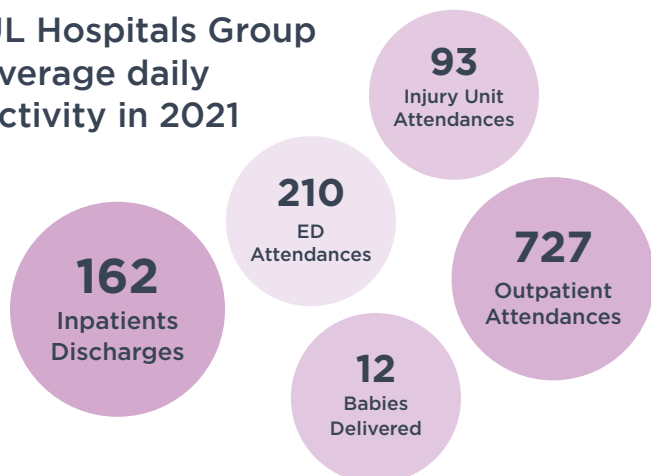
What does UL Hospitals Group do?



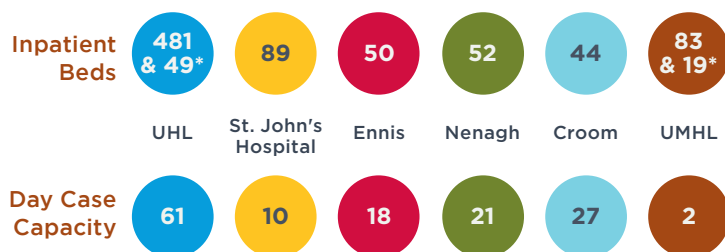
UL Hospitals Group provides emergency, surgical and medical services on an inpatient and outpatient basis to a catchment area of some 385,172 people in the Midwest of Ireland.

Our 5,043 strong staff (WTE) are proud to serve our community, and we are committed to treating our patients with care, compassion and kindness.

UL Hospitals Group average daily activity in 2021



Hospital Beds



*The UHL figure is made up of 481 adult beds and 49 paediatric beds.

*The UMHL figure is made up of 83 inpatient beds and 19 cots in the neonatal unit.

*Inpatient is a patient who goes into hospital to receive medical or surgical care and stays there one or more nights while they are being treated.

*Day Case is a patient admitted on an elective basis; no overnight stay; admitted and discharged on same day. Patient care that resulted in a birth/delivery is not included in day case capacity figures.

University Hospital Limerick (UHL)

UHL is the largest hospital in the Group, providing emergency and critical care to the people of the Midwest, especially those who require more complex medical and surgical care.



UHL is one of just eight specialist cancer centres in the country.

The hospital has a dedicated coronary care centre treating patients for serious heart attacks, and a thrombolysis centre, providing vital care for acute stroke.

UHL provides cutting edge surgical and non-surgical healthcare services.



UHL has the only ED in the Midwest, caring for patients 24/7, 365 days a year.



Ennis, Nenagh and St. John's Hospitals

Treatment for minor injuries (Injury Units)

Medical Assessment through GP referral

Day Surgery

St John's Hospital also cares for more complex surgical patients who require a short hospital stay.

Specialist Maternity and Orthopaedic Services

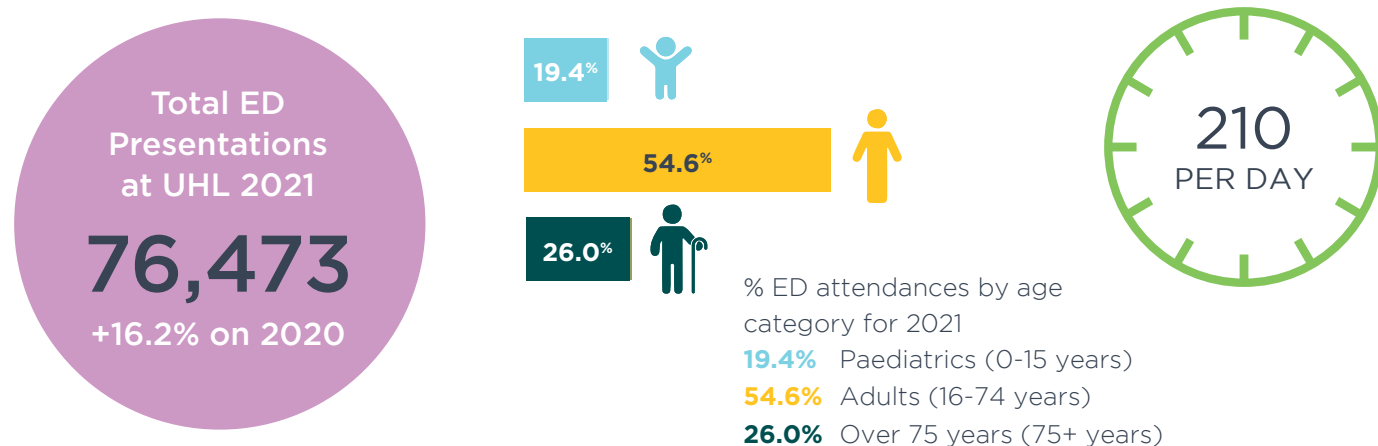
The Group has two Specialist hospitals, University Maternity Hospital Limerick, and Croom Orthopaedic Hospital, a regional centre of excellence.



UL Hospitals Group: Our Year in Figures

Activity & Operational Performance for 2021

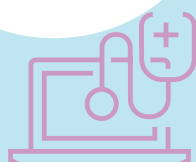
Emergency Department (ED) University Hospital Limerick (UHL)



Injury Unit

Injury Unit presentations accounted for 30.7% of all emergency presentations across the Group.

33,858
Presentations
+13.2% on 2020



Readmission Rates

Medical



Emergency readmission rate for acute medical conditions, to the same hospital within 30 days of discharge. 12.2% across the Group. The 2021 national benchmark target was less than or equal to 11.1%.

12.2%

Surgical



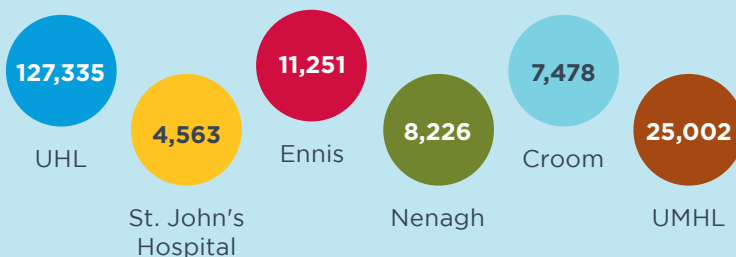
The Group's 2021 surgical readmission rate, to the same hospital within 30 days of discharge, 1.8%. The 2020 national benchmark target was less than or equal to 2%.

1.8%

Outpatient Attendances

Total of new and return outpatient attendances across all sites in 2021.

183,855
+5.6% on 2021



Average Length of Stay (ALOS)

MEDICAL 4.9 Days

ULHG remained under the 2021 national benchmark target of ≤5.4 days.

SURGICAL 4.5 Days

ULHG remained under the 2021 national benchmark target of ≤5.1 days.

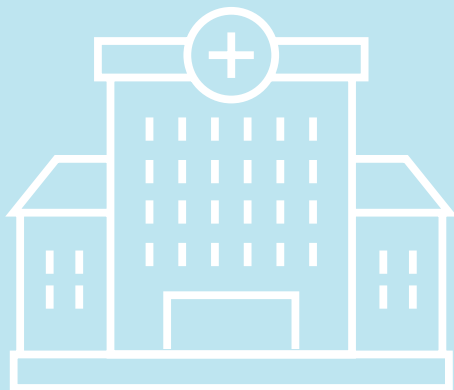
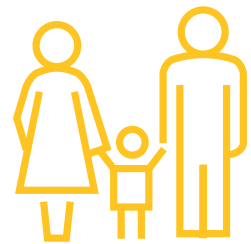
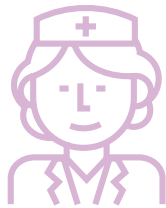
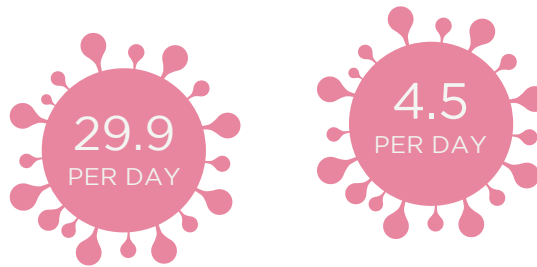
COVID-19

COVID-19 cases

The average number of:

- COVID-19 positive patients in 2021 was 29.9 per day
- COVID-19 positive patients in ICU in 2021 was 4.5 per Day

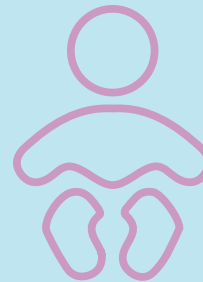
(Source PPBI)



Births

4,294
BIRTHS
4,149 in 2020

University Maternity Hospital Limerick is the busiest maternity hospital outside of Dublin and Cork.



Day of Surgery (DOSA)

Rate of elective surgical inpatients who had principal procedure conducted on day of admission was 74.8%. The 2021 national target was 91.6%.

Inpatient & Day Cases

Medical



Day
Cases

38,372*

36,442

Inpatients

*This includes 19,374
Dialysis Day Cases

Surgical



Day
Cases

16,343

19,726

Inpatients

Maternal & Child Health



Day
Cases

719

10,548

Inpatients

Staff, Industry and Professional Awards

Health Service Excellence Awards

CEO, Prof Colette Cowan and Director of HR, Lorraine Rafter presented Certificates of Achievement to the UL Hospitals Group finalists of the 2021 Health Service Excellence Awards. Congratulations to all.



Category: Excellence in Quality Care
Lead: Hannah Murphy
Project: ACDC - Accelerated Community Discharge Care-Plan for hip fracture patients.



Category: Excellence in Quality Care
Lead: Anthony Moynihan
Project: Novel use of CT coronary-angiography enables accurate diagnosis in ED.



Category: Excellence in Quality Care
Lead: Niamh Hogan
Project: Title: Virtual Visiting - connecting patients to their families using video technology.



Category: Service Development & Innovation in Responding to COVID
Lead: Dr Orla Neylon
Project: Accommodation of a paediatric diabetes service to the COVID pandemic.

Missing from the pictures

Category: Innovation in Service Delivery **Title:** Virtual Triage of ULHG Spinal Orthopaedic waiting list

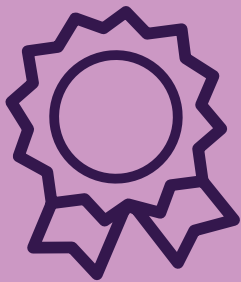


Mr. Colin Peirce delivers 43rd Millin Lecture

Consultant Colorectal and General Surgeon Mr. Colin Peirce was bestowed with one of the most prestigious honours a surgeon in Ireland can receive, when he was chosen to deliver the 43rd annual Millin Lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) Virtual conference.

His lecture, "Electrodes To Robots - Evidence Based Change In Surgical Practice" was one of the highlights of the conference.

Staff, Industry and Professional Awards



NOCA 'Quality Improvement Champion' Award 2021

The UL Hospitals Group project focused on early and safe transition of hip fracture patients to home, with input from a multi-disciplinary team to support early community-based rehabilitation. The team included Pamela Hickey CNS Orthopaedics, Dr. Nur Atikah Mohd Asri Orthopaedic Geriatric Registrar and Stephen White Senior Physiotherapist.

Outstanding Collaboration Award (University of Limerick (UL President's Research Excellence and Impact Awards)

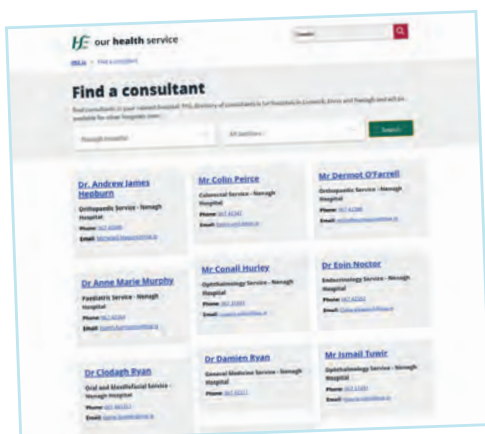
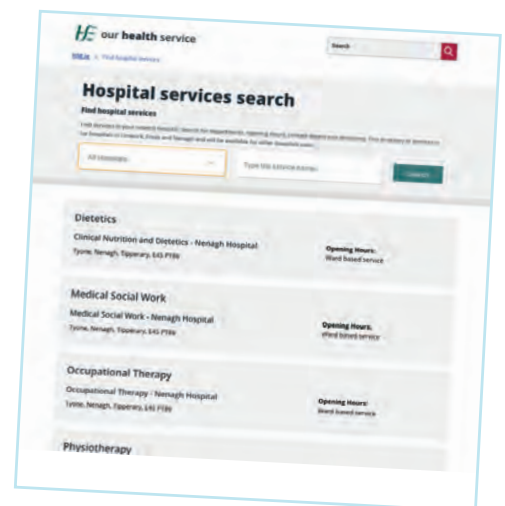
Conferred on staff from UL Hospitals Group and UL for their decade long collaboration including:

Prof Nuala O'Connell, Consultant Clinical Microbiologist, UHL; Prof Barry Linnane, Consultant Respiratory Paediatrician, UHL; Prof Calvin Coffey, Consultant Surgeon UHL and School of Medicine, UL; Barbara Slevin, Assistant Director of Nursing, Infection Prevention and Control; Dr Lorraine Power, Consultant Clinical Microbiologist, UHL; James Powell, Surveillance Scientist, UHL; Maureen O'Hara, Clinical microbiology laboratory team, UHL; Paediatric and adult respiratory nursing and physiotherapy teams, UHL and St John's Hospital, Limerick; Infection Prevention & Control for CPE Management, ULHG.

Our new Services Directory

We launched the UL Hospitals Group Services Directory in January 2021. The online directory includes information on up to 300 patient facing services and facilities across the group. This includes service opening hours, service location and contact numbers for each service. The Services Directory also includes a Consultant Directory where there is a listing of over 200 consultants across our hospitals and biographies where provided.

We are the first hospital group in the country to have this information available to our patients and service users and we continue to work with the HSE digital team to update, develop and improve the information.



This project came about as part of the HSE Digital Roadmap, a plan to transform and focus on the public facing elements of the HSE's digital fabric. It will ensure that everything we do online meets users' needs and supports them to understand and navigate the health service and to manage and improve their health and wellbeing.

You can find the Services Directory and Consultant Directory at ulh.ie.



COVID-19 healthcare staff vaccination programme begins in Midwest

On the 04 January 2021, University Hospital Limerick (UHL) Staff Nurse Rosaline O'Brien became the first healthcare professional in the Midwest to receive a vaccine against COVID-19.

Rosaline is a County Limerick native working in UHL for 40 years. The vaccine was administered by Dr Catherine Motherway, Consultant in Anaesthesia & Intensive Care.

A network of peer vaccinators then administered the vaccines to all staff including nursing, medical, healthcare assistants, allied health professionals and support staff.

Top: Rosaline O'Brien, Triage Nurse in the Emergency Department at UHL (seated) with Dr Catherine Motherway, Consultant in Anaesthesia & Intensive Care, UHL.

Right: Back row (l to r): Stephanie Chawke, CNM2, Siobhan Moloney, CNM3 and Michelle Cooke, Assistant Director of Nursing. Front row (l to r): Shannon O'Grady, Staff Nurse and Orla Murphy, Occupational Therapist.

Ward 8B opens, completing 60 Bed Block



Ward 8B opened in January completing the third phase of the opening plan for the 60 Bed Block at UHL, the ward has 20 en-suite single rooms and greatly assisted in the isolation of patients during COVID-19.



Development of the 96 Bed Block on the University Hospital Limerick (UHL) campus

In February, we were delighted to announce that planning permission was secured for the development of the 96 Bed Block on the UHL campus.

The 96 bed block will be located over the current Emergency Department at UHL.



Operation Transformation

Staff Nurse Hazel Hartigan from St. John's Hospital, Limerick featured in Operation Transformation (OT) on RTE 1.

Hazel was one of the OT leaders, leading participants to a healthier lifestyle in 2021.



Top: Interior and exterior artist's impressions of the 96 Bed Block at UHL

Bottom: Hazel Hartigan, Staff Nurse, St. John's Hospital, Limerick

March



New Outpatients Department at Ennis Hospital

Our ongoing work to improve access to hospital outpatient services for the people of Co. Clare and the Midwest passed a significant milestone in March, with the opening of the brand new Outpatients Department (OPD) for Ennis Hospital.

Situated approximately 3.5km from Ennis Hospital in Westpoint Retail Park, Kilrush Road, the new building is easily accessible from the M18 Limerick-Galway motorway and N85 by-pass of the Co. Clare town.

The new OPD department houses the outpatient services from Ennis Hospital, and also allows for the expansion of outpatient services into the future.

Top: Pictured (l to r) Kate Meade Staff Nurse, Claire Lenane, Clinical Nurse Manager, Fiona Johnson, Clinical Nurse Specialist and Fiona Higgins, Staff Nurse, Ennis Hospital Outpatients Department.

Right: TY Student Orla Carr, Scoil Na Tríonóide Naofa, Doon, County Limerick, logs in from home to the Junior Health Sciences Academy TY showcase.



Junior Health Sciences Academy early careers showcase

Over 1,600 Transition Year (TY) students from the Midwest and beyond, took part in the Junior Health Sciences Academy virtual early careers showcase in April.

The event, which also involved the Limerick and Clare Education & Training Board and Limerick Education Centre, introduced TY students to careers in healthcare and programmes of study in health available in the region. Speakers included Hurler of the Year Gearoid Hegarty, Ireland hockey international Naomi Ni Chearbhaill and others.



Dr Catherine Motherway wins Limerick Person of the Year

We were very proud when in April 2021, Dr Catherine Motherway, Consultant in Anaesthesia & Intensive Care at University Hospital Limerick (UHL), was named Limerick Person of the Year for 2020.

Dr Motherway, who was the monthly winner for May 2020, was named the overall winner for her work since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020.

Top: Dr Catherine Motherway, Consultant in Anaesthesia & Intensive Care, UHL.

Right: The first to get the COVID-19 vaccine on the opening day of the area vaccination centre at the West County Hotel, Ennis, was Peter Gerry Earls from Sixmilebridge, pictured with vaccinator Catherine Fogarty.



Opening of Ennis and Nenagh vaccination centres

The COVID-19 vaccination centres in the West County Hotel, Ennis, and the Abbey Court Hotel, Nenagh, opened in April.

Together with the vaccination centre at the Radisson Blu Limerick, which opened in March, the three facilities formed a vaccination network to accelerate the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine in the Midwest.

May



Cyber Attack

On 14 May 2021 a human-operated 'Conti' ransomware attack was detected on the HSE network. The CEO of the HSE invoked the Critical Incident Process and established a National Crisis Management Team to manage the incident, our CEO Prof Colette Cowan established a local Hospital Crisis Management Team to manage the attack at ULHG.

Our IT systems including patient information systems, clinical care systems and laboratory systems were severely affected and significant disruption immediately occurred with immediate consequences for the thousands of people who require health services every day. Non-clinical systems (e.g. financial systems, payroll and procurement systems) were also affected.

The Defence Forces supported our ICT team in the recovery process as they worked to get systems back up and running.

Top: Members of our UL Hospitals Group ICT team

Right: Pictured (l to r) Chief Academic Officer, Prof Paul Burke and Dr. Tee Keat Teoh



Inaugural NCHD Conference

Well done to all NCHD's who won prizes for their submission to the Inaugural UL Hospitals NCHD Conference at the Clinical Education and Research Centre, University Hospital Limerick (UHL) in May.

Particular mention to the overall Gold Award winner Dr. Tee Keat Teoh, SpR Microbiology (pictured).



Mike Moloney walk

West Limerick man Mike Moloney, who survived a gruelling 21-week hospital battle with COVID-19 had an emotional reunion with staff at University Hospital Limerick (UHL) in June.

Mr Moloney and his family completed a symbolic one-kilometre walk to the hospital to express their gratitude to the healthcare workers for placing Mike on the road to recovery. They were accompanied by our CEO Prof Colette Cowan and members of staff involved in Mike's care.

Top: Mike Moloney completing his 1km walk to UHL, supported by UL Hospitals Group CEO, Prof Colette Cowan, and Dr Catherine Motherway, Consultant in Anaesthesia & Intensive Care, UHL, leading a group that included his wife, son and daughters, grandchildren, and staff from UHL and St Ita's Hospital, Newcastle West.

Right: Pictured (l to r) Noreen Spillane, Chief Operations Officer, UL Hospitals Group, Dr Mai Mannix, Director of Public Health Mid-West, Mayor of Limerick City & County, Cllr Michael Collins, Maria Bridgeman, Chief Officer, HSE Community Healthcare Midwest, Ian Brennan and Keith Mullane, National Ambulance Service.

Mayor honours frontline healthcare workers



Mayor of Limerick City & County, Cllr Michael Collins, honoured healthcare workers on the front line of battle against COVID-19 with scrolls in recognition of the outstanding dedication, care and support provided by them during COVID-19.

Scrolls were presented to ULHG, members of the National Ambulance Service, Department of Public Health Mid West and HSE Mid West Community Healthcare.



Croom Orthopaedic Hospital opens its new €15m theatre suite

In July, Ireland's most modern operating theatre suite opened at Croom Orthopaedic Hospital.

The €15m theatre suite has four operating theatres, a new Sterile Services Department, a reception area, a first stage recovery room and other support spaces. It's situated on the first floor of Croom's state-of-the-art Mague Unit, which has 24 en-suite single rooms.

The Mague Unit was developed as part of the nationally-funded response to COVID-19, with funding from the Mid-Western Hospitals Development Trust. The Trust acknowledged the significant contribution from the JP McManus Pro-Am, without whose assistance this new complex would not have been completed.

Top: Front row (l to r) Katie Sheehan, Assistant Director of Nursing and Mary Russell, CNM3, Croom Orthopaedic Hospital
Back row (l to r) Eimear Breen, CNM2 and Aileen Barrow, A/CNM, Croom Orthopaedic Hospital.

Right: Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, with COVID-19 vaccinators Sinead O'Brien and Rachael Kennedy, at the Midwest Vaccination Centre, Abbey Court Hotel, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.



Minister for Health visits Limerick and Nenagh Vaccination Centres

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, visited the COVID-19 Vaccination Centres in Limerick (Limerick Racecourse) and Nenagh (Abbey Court Hotel) in July and met with the vaccination teams at the frontline who were responsible for delivering vaccines to our community in the Midwest.



New Nenagh Heart Failure Support Unit welcomes first patients

Staff at Nenagh Hospital welcomed the first patients to its new Heart Failure Support Unit in August.

Among them were local resident Timothy Ryan, who cut the ribbon. Timothy was one of the first people to avail of the service when it first opened in 2012.

Since then, the team has been providing specialist care and a chronic disease management programme to people with heart failure. Thanks to financial support from the Friends of Nenagh Hospital and the HSE, the service now has a designated space in the outpatients department following a refurbishment and equipping project.

Top: Pictured is patient Timothy Ryan from Nenagh, centre, with, from left, Dr Syed Abbas, Consultant Cardiologist, Jacinta Glasgow, CNM2 Heart Failure Support Unit, Agnes Carroll, Clerical Officer and Kathryn O'Brien, CNS Heart Failure, Heart Failure Support Unit.

Right: Back row (l to r): PALS volunteers Kay Bedford, Seán Duffy, Tina Cummins and John Browne. Front (l to r): PALS volunteers Áine Dunne, Mary Meaney, Elizabeth O'Leary, PALS Manager and Margaret Grimes, PALS volunteer.

PALS volunteers return



We were delighted to welcome back some of our PALS volunteers.

It was wonderful to see them brightening up our corridors & wards once again, after a break due to COVID-19.

September



New Molecular Laboratory at University Hospital Limerick boosts testing capacity

The new Molecular Laboratory at University Hospital Limerick (UHL) boosted the hospital's already significant COVID-19 testing capacity in 2021, and provides the potential, post-pandemic, to increase the scope of molecular testing in infectious diseases.

With a total project cost of approximately €4m and funded as part of the national pandemic response, development work on the laboratory commenced in Autumn 2020. The Molecular Lab opened in early 2021 and by September, COVID-19 testing capacity in the hospital had risen by 50%.

Top: Dr Patrick Stapleton, Consultant Microbiologist, and Colm McDonnell, Chief Medical Scientist, UL Hospitals Group, at the new Molecular Lab in UHL

Right: Pictured (l to r) Cath Murphy, Virtual Shop, Elizabeth O'Leary, PALS Manager, UHL and Conor Nestor, Virtual Shop



Virtual shop service at UHL

Our Virtual Shop service at UHL enables patients, family and friends to purchase items such as newspapers, toiletries, confectionery and more by phone, items are then delivered to wards.

The service was introduced during COVID-19, due to visiting restrictions, so that patients, friends and family could purchase items for loved ones.



Colleagues take part in RTE's Frontline Choir

A number of our colleagues were involved in RTE's Frontline Choir series, broadcast on RTE 1 in October.

The Frontline Choir, made up of healthcare workers across the country, was led by world-renowned conductor David Brophy.

Our colleagues who took part in the Frontline Choir included:

- Dr John Twomey, Consultant Paediatrician, University Hospital Limerick
- Emmanuel Ventura, ICU Nurse, University Hospital Limerick
- Dr Nuala O'Connell, Consultant Microbiologist, University Hospital Limerick
- Gemma Brolly, Staff Nurse, Ennis Hospital
- Patricia Ryan, Receptionist, Nenagh Hospital
- Christine Sawallich, Neonatal Nurse, University Maternity Hospital Limerick

Top: The Frontline Choir

Right: Pictured are (l to r) Helen Byrt and Carmen Regan, Clinical Midwife Managers in Infant Feeding at UMHL

National Breastfeeding Week



The theme of National Breastfeeding Week in October was "Feeding the Future-Supporting Breastfeeding through the Pandemic and Beyond".

University Maternity Hospital Limerick (UMHL) endeavoured throughout COVID-19 to continue to provide quality support for mums to get breastfeeding off to a good start.

Helen Byrt and Carmen Regan, Clinical Midwife Managers in Infant Feeding at UMHL, wrote an article for Breastfeeding Week about the changes during COVID-19 and initiatives introduced including Colostrum Harvesting. Read the full article on ulh.ie.

November



Final rounds for beloved Children's Ark therapy dog, Bonnie

The best friend of patients and staff at the Children's Ark paediatric unit in University Hospital Limerick (UHL) made her final rounds on 22 November, bidding a fond farewell to all before she stepped down into a well-deserved retirement.

Bonnie the therapy dog paid regular visits to the Ark over four years, playing with young inpatients and day patients, keeping them company during diagnostic tests and during their recovery from procedures, and brightening the day for all staff in the unit.

She is to be succeeded by little sister Bella a two-year-old miniature schnauzer.

Top: Katie Liston from Newcastle West, County Limerick, pictured with Bonnie the therapy dog

Right: Entrance to Limerick Vaccination Centre at Limerick Racecourse



Limerick COVID-19 vaccination centre moves to Scoil Carmel

The Limerick COVID-19 vaccination centre relocated from Limerick Racecourse to Scoil Carmel, O'Connell Avenue, Limerick City in November.

The Limerick vaccination centre first opened at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Limerick in February 2021 as the vaccination programme rolled out, moving to Limerick Racecourse in the summer when the hospitality sector opened up to the public.



“Kathleen’s Arthur” keeps promise

Every Christmas for the past five years, Limerick city man Arthur O’Sullivan has been keeping his promise to an Emergency Department (ED) nurse, Kathleen Delaney, to bring her a slice of birthday cake to thank her for taking care of him.

The unique connection between the two was formed when Arthur was brought to the ED on Christmas Eve of 2016 after he collapsed at his 70th birthday party.

Arthur goes the extra mile to make good on the promise he made to Kathleen and every year, delivers a special cake for her and her colleagues. Kathleen is now a Clinical Nurse Manager in the Acute Medical Assessment Unit at University Hospital Limerick (UHL).

Top: Pictured are (l to r) Kathleen Delaney, Clinical Nurse Manager, UHL and Arthur O’Sullivan.

Right: Pictured is Bernadette Murphy, Director of Nursing, Perioperative Directorate, UL Hospitals Group and Project lead for the Visitor App.

New Visitor App for visitors, support persons and patients

In December, we launched a new Visitor Booking App to provide loved ones of hospital inpatients and women using maternity services with a convenient, efficient way of organising access to our six sites.

Inpatients or women accessing maternity services can now nominate their visitors, support persons or partners. If patients are unable to communicate during admission, we will organise this with their loved ones.



National Inpatient Experience Survey

The National Inpatient Experience Survey (NIES) offers our patients the opportunity to describe their experiences of our services in University Hospital Limerick, Ennis Hospital, Nenagh Hospital, St. John's Hospital and Croom Orthopaedic Hospital.

The NIES is part of the National Care Experience Programme, a joint initiative by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health.



The aim of the survey is to find out from our patients what is working well in our hospitals and where we can improve.

We then work with this invaluable feedback to drive quality improvements in our services. The survey normally takes place during the month of May each year, however due to the cyber attack on HSE IT systems in 2021, it was necessary for the Care Experience Programme to move the 2021 survey to September.

Patients aged 16 and over who spent a minimum of 24 hours as an inpatient in hospital and were discharged during September were invited to give feedback, with publication of the results planned for May 2022. Preliminary results showed that areas for improvement relate to more medication advice on discharge and what patients should look out for once discharged home.

The 2021 National Inpatient Experience Survey also included questions designed to gain an insight into the experience of hospital patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the survey first began in 2017*, our staff have continued to drive quality improvements to our services across our hospitals. These include:

- improved choice and nutritional value in our meals and the introduction of protected mealtimes;
- improved written information for all inpatients;
- medication awareness campaigns; and patient-centred initiatives such as the 'Hello My Name Is...Campaign', which aims to establish a human connection between our patients and staff.

***There was no survey carried out in 2020 due to COVID-19.**

Our Patient Council

In a year that began with UL Hospitals Group continuing the battle against COVID-19, the Patient Council received regular updates as the Group worked to resume services.

Among the earliest of these was a detailed presentation from Patricia O'Gorman on the rollout of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme in the MidWest.

We also began to resume normal Patient Council activity with some in-person meetings alongside Zoom meetings. We were delighted to learn of new appointments in the areas of Type 1 diabetes, cancer services and diagnostics, as well as to the PALS team.

In July Prof Colette Cowan addressed the Council on managing COVID-19 and the importance of patient and staff safety. She highlighted positive developments such as a new haematology/oncology unit, new single bed blocks and developments at Croom Orthopaedic Hospital. Reflecting on the Council's role, Prof Cowan said it was the Executive's job to enhance public/patient partnership.

Integration of community and acute services in the Enhanced Community Care Programme, along with developing a community health network, chronic disease hubs in Limerick City are new and exciting developments also mentioned by Prof Cowan.

Patient Council public/voluntary membership increased to 16 in 2021. The additional members enabled us to support more hospital committees. We thank Declan McNamara, Director of Nursing and vice-Chair of the Patient Council, for his support in encouraging representatives from all hospitals in the Group to join us.

We were also successful in getting approval for the "Hello My Name Is" telephone survey to take place when demands on staff battling the virus were reduced.

We launched a recruitment campaign for new voluntary/public members in the autumn of 2021. Expressions of interest were received from all Group Hospital areas, with interviews planned for early 2022.

We wish to thank Prof Cowan, the Executive, and staff for their considerable commitment to the Patient Council. We thank both the public and the staff Council members for their support and commitment and their work with

hospital committees. The Council is well placed to deliver on its mandate of advocacy for patients, families, and staff, and to further embed itself within the UL Hospitals Group.



John Hannafin,
Chairman, Patient Council,
UL Hospitals Group

Some compliments from our patients in 2021

Hospitals have reputations for poor food. That does not occur here. Breakfast, dinners and lunch delicious and the cup of tea in the evening was very nice.

The hospital was fabulous so clean and efficient. From the front door the staff on the unit were exceptional so welcoming so kind and caring. The standard of care was superb.

My father in law was dying, and the nurses were stunning. They couldn't have been nicer, so accommodating, and showed kindness in every action. Beautiful staff, thank you.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for actually caring for my Uncle over the Easter weekend. You cared about him as an individual and not just a patient and that meant so much. You and your colleagues are incredible, thank you.

Absolutely outstanding hospital, I wish every HSE hospital was as professional and efficient. Staff so professional, efficient, kind, helpful and seemed genuinely happy in their work.

I wish to sincerely thank everybody at the Radisson Vaccine Centre this morning. It was very efficient and well organised. To each and every member of the team I say "well done".

My whole experience is that Croom Hospital is run like a well-oiled machine.

The oncology department is fantastic and all the staff are amazing. I am very, very lucky to be treated there. My sincere thanks to all the staff there.

I don't think words will fully express my gratitude and thanks. In what are crazy, uncertain and scary times I have to say how in awe I am of the public maternity healthcare service provided to us.

I write to say that from the time of arrival at 8am at check-in to the time of my discharge, I was treated with the utmost care, kindness and attention by all the staff and personnel involved. Thanks for your hospital's excellent medical service.

