

**Health Research Round Table**  
**“Making Health Research Partnerships Work”**

**Summary Document**

**March 2008**

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## ***1. Introduction***

## Making Health Research Partnerships Work

- The Health Research Round Table was an event jointly organised by **Prospectus**, the **IDA** and the **HRB** and was the first event of its kind held in Ireland.
- The evening brought together key individuals in health research in Ireland from across the spectrum of stakeholders including representatives from; **hospitals, universities, research institutes** as well as **policy makers, funders and industry**.
- Through a combination of **guest speakers** and **participative discussions** the forum provided an overview of the health research landscape in Ireland addressing:
  - Current opportunities and challenges
  - Practical experience of conducting health research in Ireland
  - Possible ways of moving forward, in partnership.
- The event similarly provided the **opportunity to meet with and learn from potential collaboration partners**.

## Introductory Speakers

- **Vincent Barton**, Managing Director, Prospectus
- **Enda Connolly**, Director, Life Sciences and R, D & I Policy, IDA Ireland
- **Mairead O'Driscoll**, Acting Director, Health Research Board

## Guest Speakers

- **Dr. Pierre Meulien**, Chief Scientific Officer of Genome BC, Canada and ex-CEO of the Dublin Molecular Medicine Centre (DMMC)
- **Dr. Kevin Lee**, Head of Immunoinflammation Discovery, Immunoinflammation Centre of Excellence in Drug Discovery, GlaxoSmithKline UK
- **Prof. Tim O'Brien**, Professor of Medicine at the National University of Ireland, Galway and Director of the Regenerative Medicine Institute (REMEDI).

## Topics Discussed

- Industry and Clinicians –building trust based partnerships in health
- Using research outcomes to improve healthcare systems
- Balancing clinical and research needs –ways to use partnerships to boost research as a priority within hospitals
- Ways of working in partnerships to create research critical mass
- Would agreeing research priorities help partnerships?

## *2. Summary of Key Messages*

### Key Message No. 1

**An improved national IT infrastructure would enable much more effective and successful health research partnerships to happen.**

This involves:

- Developing health sector ICT systems to allow for the development of a more effective approach to the compilation and utilisation of patient data. Specifically, a national electronic patient record system would enable significantly better health research.

### Key Message No. 2

**Health research needs to move up the overall Health and Research agendas through development of a more integrated approach for fostering research between the three key players – academia, industry and clinicians.**

- Integration of research in overall healthcare planning and development
- Better integration of research in the education process for clinicians
- Development of approaches that lead to better involvement of GPs, allied health practitioners and others in research activity
- Development of approaches to applying/translating research outcomes for improved healthcare
- Early stage coordination of translational research with health systems and social science research so as to speed up the impact on improved healthcare.

### Key Message No. 3

**Ireland needs to move towards a more harmonised and coordinated clinical research infrastructure to enable better health research partnerships.**

Such an infrastructure would include:

- Further development of comprehensive physical facilities (labs, databases, clinical research centres, etc)
- Development of common governance and ethical frameworks to enable the creation of successful partnerships
- Further expansion of successful models such as ICRIN (Irish Clinical Research Infrastructure Network)
- Structures and arrangements to “socialise the space of health research”, by establishing forums for industry and clinicians to advance the health research agenda
- Development of partnerships to form “Pre-competitive consortia” by individual researchers, hospitals and other institutions prior to engagement with Industry.

### Key Message No. 4

**At a national level, Ireland needs to establish the structures and systems that will professionalise health research partnerships and enable them to be effective and collectively beneficial.**

The development of such systems and structures would include:

- A national approach to providing the systems and mechanisms that would provide resources, time and recognition to enable clinical research to take place (Include protected time in hospital consultant appointments for research)
- Greater clarity around the existing guidelines for the capturing and development of Intellectual Property
- Systemised approaches to the creation of health research partnerships for the protection and benefit of the patient, researchers, institutions and industry partners.

### Key Message No. 5

**In undertaking partnerships between industry, hospitals and academia, early, open and transparent communication in partnerships is essential to the success of the research partnership.**

Partners must pay attention to the following:

- In establishing a partnership, all parties must have common objectives but must also give mutual recognition that different priorities or agendas may have to be managed
- The priorities of each partner should given equal validity and be recognised by other partners. Towards this, clarity in the terms of engagement, mutual understanding and allocation of respective roles will be critical
- Regular, meaningful, ongoing engagement should be established and a process of review should be set up
- All parties should approach the partnership with understanding that the partnership will evolve, priorities and circumstances may change and that the partnership may have to adapt to these changes – Flexibility on the sides of all partners will be required.

### Key Message No. 6

**To make health research partnerships work, it will be essential that all parties (industry, hospitals and academia) recognise the natural tensions and mutually beneficial nature of such partnerships.**

There may be a natural tension between the respective needs of hospitals, industry and universities which needs to be recognised and addressed:

- Recognition that industry, hospitals and universities bring individual skills and strengths that are critical to the overall research effort
- Clarity in approach to possible areas of tension:
  - Ethics
  - Access and involvement of patients
  - Ownership and application of new knowledge and Intellectual Property
  - Sharing of information.

### Key Message No. 7

**Despite a good degree of policy development nationally, a challenge remains regarding ownership of research at a national level. In order to bring the health research agenda forward a single national body could assist in setting and driving the health research agenda.**

This body could play a critical role in the following:

- Provision of leadership in maintaining focus and setting priorities to keep health research high up on the national agenda
- Leading an approach to identify and remove barriers that currently prevent the full achievement of health research potential
- Coordination of the different constituencies involved (or with an interest) in health research (Industry, Government, Hospitals, Universities)
- Promoting and driving the development of infrastructure, systems and mechanisms to support and successful engagement between industry, hospitals and universities
- Plan and lead strategies to achieve the growth of critical mass within health research
- Facilitating knowledge sharing and enabling open communication between partners
- Recognising and rewarding good practice.

## ***3. Feedback***

## Comments received included:

- *“Very informative, excellent guest speakers and different topics worked very well”*
- *“Audience was well balanced to address on of the major issues affecting Ireland's social + economical development”*
- *“We are in a period of significant change – quarterly [forum] would be useful in near term (2-3 years)”*

## Suggested potential future topics included:

- Commercialisation of research outcomes
- Primary-secondary interface in research and "research information technology infrastructure"
- Integration of research policy across HSE/METR and university - development and joint governance