



## **Adverse impact of current medical scientist shortage: quality assurance in Cervical Screening and laboratory diagnostics:**

There is a staffing crisis in medical laboratories in Ireland's hospitals, according to the Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine (Academy) and the Medical Laboratory Scientists' Association (MLSA), the professional body and trade union representing medical scientists. If there are insufficient scientists, then the turnaround time for laboratory tests will increase and patients will have to wait longer for results. This will in turn impact on treatment and management of patient's illnesses. This is a national problem and across all specialties but is of particular concern in histopathology laboratories in Galway, Waterford and Dublin.

LabCon2019, the biennial joint conference of the Academy and MLSA will be held in Kilkenny on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and will have a strong emphasis on quality assurance, workforce shortages and workforce planning.

Laboratory medicine is a clinical service that provides urgent and routine testing of patients' samples in order to diagnose and monitor diseases and disorders in patients. It spans a wide range of disciplines including Cellular Pathology (Histopathology), Clinical Chemistry, Haematology, Immunology, Medical Microbiology, Molecular Diagnostics, Point of Care Testing, Transfusion and Transplantation Science and Virology. According to Academy President, Dr Brigid Lucey: "Medical scientists are at the forefront not only in the provision of these services but in the management and delivery of the services."

The plenary session of the conference will hear **Dr Karin Denton** who, together with Dr Gabriel Scally, carried out the **scoping enquiry into the Cervical Check programme**. Dr

Denton, who is a Consultant Cytopathologist at North Bristol NHS will speak about the importance of quality assurance in cancer screening programmes. At a separate session, Dr Cara Martin, Associate Professor in Molecular Pathology and Tumour Biology, The Coombe Women and Infants' University Hospital and TCD, will inform delegates about **HPV testing: a changing paradigm for cervical screening in Ireland.**

The Academy fully supports the introduction of the primary HPV test and is available to work with the National Screening Service to provide expert advice on future pathological service provision for this and other cancer screening programmes. The system chosen for HPV testing must be primarily selected on the basis of sensitivity of detection, rather than cost

The Academy advises and recommends that on introduction of HPV screening, the entire cervical screening service be re-established in Ireland to ensure an entirely integrated service for HPV, Cytology, Colposcopy and Histopathology for the women of Ireland in the one health system, ensuring continuity of care, and clinical governance. The Academy recommends and advises that the cervical screening programme that is put in place for the women of Ireland is quality assured subject to regular independent audit and review.

The conference will also be addressed by Rosarii Mannion, HSE National Director of Human Resources in. In addition, Prof Jo Martin, President of the Royal College of Pathologists will talk about the British experience of laboratory workforce management. The Academy and MLSA are calling for increased student intake for accredited undergraduate medical science programmes, a graduate pathway for entry to the profession and improved career pathways for existing medical scientists to address the severe recruitment and retention difficulties. to combat the current shortages of qualified medical scientists and more defined progression pathways, not least as a commitment to workforce planning for future patient care needs. The Academy and MLSA reiterates their advice to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health that the laboratory service be configured, led and managed by consultant medical scientists and pathologists, a service configuration that is now emerging as standard practice in the UK. . Our position, in the interest of public safety, is that all the clinical laboratory services must be fully integrated with clinical services. It must be provided by qualified, registered professionals in a properly resourced accredited system

Full LabCon Ireland 2019 programme attached.

Further information please contact:

Dr Brigid Lucey: President, Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine Mobile:  
0863707907 email: [president@acslm.ie](mailto:president@acslm.ie)

Terry Casey: General Secretary, Medical Laboratory Scientists Association  
Mobile: 0869037190 email: [tcasey@siptu.ie](mailto:tcasey@siptu.ie)

Dr Irene Regan: Vice President, Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine  
Mobile: 0872328066 email: [vicepresident@acslm.ie](mailto:vicepresident@acslm.ie)