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Special EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
Boord O Owre Ocht UE Projecks

Press Release

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PERSONALISED MEDICAL CARE IS FOCUS FOR EU INTERREG VA FUNDED ULSTER UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECT

Ulster University is to establish a Centre for Personalised Medicine, Clinical Decision Making and Patient Safety which aims to dramatically improve clinical decision-making and tailored patient care in five priority disease areas.

The research project, which will be a cross-border collaboration between the academic, clinical and commercial sectors, will focus on heart disease, emergency surgery, acute kidney injury, diabetes and dementia.

The EU's INTERREG VA programme, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body, has offered Ulster University €8.6 million of funding for the Centre which will have an overall cost of €9.89 million. The centre's research will improve the health of tens of thousands of patients and help cut healthcare costs dramatically in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and internationally.

Personalised medicine, also known as precision or stratified medicine, is a move away from a 'one size fits all' approach to the treatment and care of patients with a particular condition to one that uses new approaches, including genomics, to better diagnose and manage patients' health and devise targeted therapies to treat their illnesses. This project will use research to deliver practical solutions to clinicians.

Professor Tony Bjourson, who is Professor of Genomics at Ulster University, will lead the project. He said: **"Ulster University has a longstanding history of world-leading medical and health-related teaching and research. This new Centre for Personalised Medicine, Clinical Decision Making and Patient Safety will add yet another dimension to the University's work and standing in this important area."**

"Ulster invests £42m in research and innovation programmes each year. That research is often undertaken in partnership with commercial organisations ensuring it is relevant and applicable to real world problems. With the healthcare sector under immense pressure globally and the need for effective, tailored treatment options coupled with excellence of care, this INTERREG VA funded project will place Ulster University at the heart of the solution."

The Centre's research objectives include developing tools which will allow earlier diagnosis of dementia and therefore earlier clinical intervention and support, and also learning how to recognise acute kidney injury earlier to reduce mortality and hospital stay. It will also seek to improve the triage of patients with chest pain to allow more appropriate and rapid emergency referral, and look at how to help people better manage their diabetes.

Professor Bjourson added: **"Currently 30 per cent to 50 per cent of patients don't respond to the treatment they are prescribed and this number is much higher for some diseases. Through this new Centre we will to improve the health of tens of thousands of people and at the same time develop more cost-effective healthcare not just here in Northern Ireland, but around the world. In addition we will be creating innovative products and new optimised care pathway tools and we're confident that this will attract investment that will contribute to economic growth."**

"Translating the promises of personalised or stratified medicine discoveries from the lab to the clinic, where the rubber meets the road, is recognised as a major global challenge. The key strength of this project is that it is driving personalised medicine discoveries to the front line to help clinicians make better clinical decisions and improved treatment outcomes for us as patients."

Welcoming the project Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive Officer with the Special EU Programmes Body, said: **"This project is a unique EU funded cross-border partnership that has the potential to revolutionise patient treatment and care for serious medical conditions. It represents a significant leap forward with research that can help create a more efficient and effective health service in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland."**

"Research undertaken by these renowned health and life sciences organisations, involved in the project, will also make a positive contribution towards the European Union's 2020 target of increasing investment in Research and Innovation activity."

The research institutes and companies that will be partnering with Ulster University in the new Centre are the University of Highlands and Islands, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Donegal Clinic Research Academy, National University of Ireland Galway, Letterkenny University Hospital, the Clinical Translational Research and Innovation Centre, Western Health and Social Care Trust, NHS Highlands Scotland, United Healthcare Group/Optum, Clinishare Ltd, Advanced Research Cryptography Ltd, Randox Laboratories Ltd and Northern Ireland Clinical Research Services Ltd.

Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in Ireland and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland.

- **Ends**

Notes to Editor:

SEUPB

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society.

- The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.

- The INTERREG VA Programme has a value of €283 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.

- For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu

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