



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

## MEDIA WATCH

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**8 December 2017 – 15 December 2017**

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### All-island Multiple Sclerosis research study launched

A new all-island research study into Multiple Sclerosis has been launched in Cork.

MS, as it is commonly known, affects more than 9,000 people in Ireland, and is the most common disabling neurological disorder among young people.

The study, which is being undertaken by Genomics Medicine Ireland, will initially invite MS patients from three hospitals in the Republic and one in Northern Ireland to take part.

It will conduct screening to identify the genetic markers that can help to diagnose, predict disease severity, and identify personalised treatments for the condition.

The hospitals included are Cork University Hospital, St Vincent's and Tallaght in Dublin, and Altnagelvin in Co Derry.

The study will be for an initial five-year period.

This is the most comprehensive research carried out on MS in Ireland and it is planned the research project will be rolled out to other hospitals on the island.

MS is one of the most elusive diseases to diagnose as symptoms can vary widely among patients.

Genomics, the study of all of a person's genes (the genome) aims to reduce the complexity by identifying the genetic markers related to MS, thereby leading to more efficient and effective diagnosis and treatment.

**Source: RTE**

9 December 2017

## £4.7m cross-border initiative to improve water for thousands

NI Water has teamed up with Irish Water to deliver a major £4.7m joint project to help boost the quality of services in border regions.

The scheme aims to improve water quality in rivers and lakes in the Lough Erne and Derg catchment areas, which provide the mains water that serves parts of counties Fermanagh, Tyrone, Donegal, Cavan, Leitrim and Longford.

The Source to Tap project is funded by the EU's Interreg VA programme, through the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), together with funding from the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland and the Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) in the Republic of Ireland.

NI Water is the lead partner in the initiative, working in collaboration with Irish Water and other bodies, including the Ulster University and The Rivers Trust.

NI Water chairman Dr Len O'Hagan, who helped launch the scheme at Waterways Ireland headquarters in Enniskillen, said: "This project will enhance at source the quality of water for thousands of homes, businesses, schools and hospitals across the region.

"Innovation, sustainability and partnership are at its core.

"Partnership between governments on both sides of the border; partnership with the SEUPB who are the principal funder of the work; partnership between various government agencies; and, most significant of all, partnership between ourselves, the local community and all those for whom the natural environment is such a precious resource.

"Working together it will help us to protect raw water quality at source across both jurisdictions by reducing the contaminants getting into the water in the first place, and raise awareness of the importance of protecting our precious drinking water resource."

The project aims to put "community and stakeholder engagement at the heart of the work with farmers, land managers, forestry providers and the wider community".

Dave Foster, director of regulatory and natural resources policy at DAERA, welcomed the move, saying: "The department is delighted to contribute match funding to this project.

"This project represents an investment in the future quality of our drinking water and, by researching and testing methods other than traditional end of pipe solutions, should deliver sustainable long term improvements in water quality."

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**

9 December 2017

## Patients face hospital ban in North despite Brexit agreement

WAITING-LIST patients who are travelling to Northern Ireland hospitals in growing numbers for treatment under the EU cross-Border scheme may lose out in the future, despite the new Brexit agreement.

Health officials were unable to give any guarantee the scheme will apply to hospitals in the North and the UK once Brexit finally triggers.

The scheme, which will remain in place until then, involves the patient paying a fee upfront, which is later reimbursed by the HSE.

Once Brexit is in place, patients from the Republic may have to travel farther to mainland Europe.

The warning comes as hospital waiting list figures for November reached record levels, with more than 684,940 patients in some form of queue.

There was more bad news for people on outpatient waiting lists as the numbers rose to nearly 500,000.

There are now 66,640 public patients facing delays of at least 18 months to see a consultant - up from 62,925 in October.

More children are also enduring longer delays.

Some 7,551 young patients are waiting at least a year-and-a-half to be seen - a jump of nearly 500 in a month.

Another 97,400 adults and children are waiting for surgery.

It emerged earlier this week the original pledge to have no children with scoliosis waiting longer than four months for surgery at the end of this month will not be met, although all will be given an appointment.

The figures show a drop in the numbers waiting for an endoscopy, an invasive diagnostic test.

It fell to 18,184 from 19,341 in October, according to the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Some 63,657 people who have already received treatment are waiting for follow-up care.

The pressures are set to increase further in the coming months as more operations are cancelled due to the rise in patients on trolleys in A&E departments, who will have to be placed in surgical beds.

The failure to make any major dent into the figures comes despite the allocation of €20m to buy additional procedures in public and private hospitals.

Budget 2018 allocated funding in the region of €10m for the remainder of 2017. Health Minister Simon Harris said the number of people waiting for an operation fell for the fourth month.

"This is the lowest number of people waiting for an operation or procedure in the last 12 months," he said.

Operation figures fell again: Health Minister Simon Harris

**Source: The Irish Independent**