



Press Release

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ULSTER UNIVERSITY LEADS ON €8.2M CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE TO IMPROVE CARDIOVASCULAR CARE

The €8.2M cross-border centre of research excellence in cardiovascular medicine will transform cardiac care in region by developing new models of care, smart wearable technologies and improved patient monitoring systems. This project is been awarded funding by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the SEUPB.

The Eastern Corridor Medical Engineering Centre (ECME); a cross border centre of research excellence within the field of cardiovascular medicine with partners in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Scotland was launched today at Ulster University.

Cardiovascular (heart and circulatory) disease causes more than a quarter (26 per cent) of all deaths in the UK; that's nearly 160,000 deaths each year – an average of 435 people each day or one death every three minutes and in the Republic of Ireland this figure is slightly higher at around 30%.

ECME will see researchers from academia and industry collaborate with partners in the health and social care system to create better models of heart disease care and develop new medical grade wearable's and remote monitoring systems to improve clinical outcomes and patient experience.

Innovative medical technology has the potential to alleviate some of the current pressures facing our healthcare system. As waiting lists grow and the demand for hospital beds increases, medical technologies such as smart wearable's, user-ready sensor technology and patient monitoring systems can improve diagnostics and patient outcomes and enable patients to live independently.



The centre will develop a regional cardiac big data database; enhance user-ready sensor technology; improve smart wearable's; reduce the complexity and cumbersomeness of point of care diagnostics; and improve smart, clinically relevant patient monitoring in assisted living and rehabilitation environments. It will also develop new prototype technologies working closely with industry and health care professionals to develop new products and novel intellectual property which will lead to economic impact across the region.

Speaking at the official launch of the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the SEUPB said: **“This is a project which has the potential to positively transform the lives of thousands of people and their families across Northern Ireland, the border region of Ireland and Western Scotland.**

“By increasing the levels of cross-border Research and Innovation within the Health & Life Sciences sector, there is the opportunity to create a strong economic impact, and this is one of the core objectives of the INTERREG VA Programme. The project has great potential and will have a highly significant impact upon how cardiovascular disease is treated on a cross-border basis,” she continued.

Professor Jim McLaughlin, Director of NIBEC at Ulster University said, **“Ulster University has established itself as a global leader in both data analytics and medical and health related research. An integral part of our Health Technology Hub, ECME will create better models for cardiac care through research and the development of generic solutions within the lucrative and growing patient monitoring market.**

“Working with our project partners we will develop a cardiac big data database to collate and analyse data from across the region and better inform decision making at both a clinical and policy level.

“Wearable technologies and remote monitoring systems have the potential to transform cardiac care. Smart technologies are helping to move care out of hospital and into the home, reducing pressure on the healthcare system. Our researchers will work to improve existing sensor technologies, point of care diagnostics and monitoring systems to improve clinical outcomes, free up hospital beds, predict patient needs and grow patient confidence and satisfaction,” he continued.



David McEaney MD, Consultant Cardiologist at the Southern Health & Social Care Trust said, **“We are excited about the potential impact that the research generated by the ECME project could have on patient outcomes. There have been many innovations in recent years which have transformed how we treat patients and we believe this project will further enhance the well-established research collaboration between Craigavon Cardiovascular Research Unit and the project’s academic partners.”**

The centre received €8.2M funding from the European Union’s INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in Ireland.

ECME is a cross border partnership between Ulster University, Southern Health and Social Care Trust Cardiac Research Unit, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, University College Dublin and the University of Highlands and Islands.

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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