



## Press Release

**Date: 05 March 2018**

### **Scots students leading the way in battling lung disease**

A research hub working to alleviate the impact of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease has won a leading healthcare award.

Scientists from the EU INTERREG VA funded BREATH (Border and Regions Airways Training Hub) – which links the University of the West of Scotland, with Universities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland – were presented with the Project of the Year Award at the Northern Ireland Healthcare Awards.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is an incurable lung disease and is a leading cause of deaths worldwide. It is particularly prevalent in both Ayrshire and Arran and Dumfries and Galloway.

The £6.8M EU INTERREG VA funded BREATH project has established a world-class team of researchers who will help address the causes, treatment and potential prevention of the disease.

Central to this transformative project is the training of a team of new PhD students in respiratory research. Of the seventeen PhDs appointed, five are primarily based at the University of the West of Scotland.

Congratulating the project on its award success Gina McIntyre CEO of the SEUPB, which manages the INTERREG VA Programme, said: “We are very proud to fund this exciting and inspirational project, leading the way forward on research for a life-threatening condition that affects millions of people living not only in Europe, but across the world.

“This cross-border partnership, including scientists and academics from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland, supported by the European Union’s INTERREG VA Programme, will share knowledge and work together for a solution to a shared problem, representing exactly what the programme is designed to do,” she continued.

Prof John Lockhart, IBEHR Director and BREATH partner at the University of the West of Scotland, said: “Throughout the five-year project, more than 30 researchers and doctoral students will work together, to better understand COPD and raise awareness of the disease. This will help encourage preventative measures, timely treatment and disease management.

“The strength of the BREATH programme is that, as with all the PhDs appointed, these students benefit from the combined expertise provided across all three institutions.

“The University of the West of Scotland has an international track record on research in inflammation and immune dysfunction, Dundalk Institute of Technology has a well-established programme on smooth muscle research and Queen’s University Belfast provides the clinical and scientific expertise on lung research. The four-year PhD



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programme plan includes placements with partners to ensure students receive dedicated training across these linked centres of expertise.”

BREATH received £6.8M funding from the European Union’s INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

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

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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](http://www.seupb.eu)

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