

Advisory Council for Science
Technology and Innovation
An Comhairle Eolaíochta

Review of Health Research in Ireland

Consultation Questions

Closing Date 7 June 2006

This questionnaire is to be completed based on the Consultation Paper 'Review of Health Research in Ireland' on www.sciencecouncil.ie. Please complete your responses in the spaces provided and return the completed document by email to lucy.cusack@forfas.ie

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1 Health Research in Ireland: Why, How and How Much?

Culture

Questions arising

How can health researchers promote public awareness of the benefits of their work?

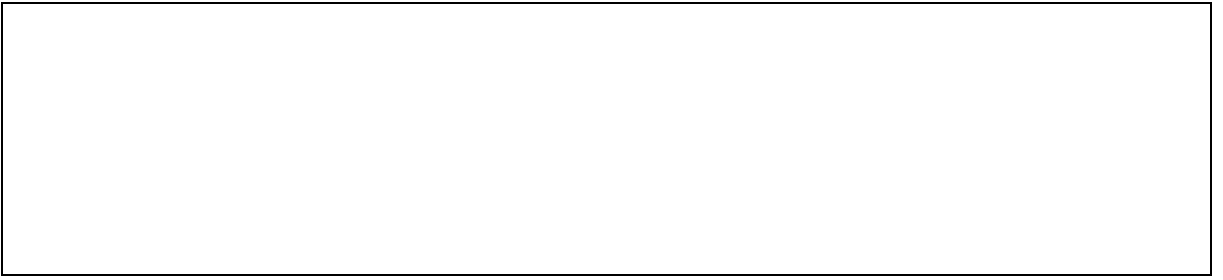
What resources should be made available for this activity?

What can you/your organisation do to contribute to this goal?

What other body should be involved in this activity?

In addition to the important points raised in this section, it should also be noted that developments in the health research sector are amongst the most exciting in science research. This is particularly relevant in attracting young people into science and particularly towards research careers. It is well known that medical courses have a very high demand and hence there is very strong competition to enter them. Emphasizing the benefits and interest of the research, which underpins much of medicine, to the general public and to high ability school students may help to attract students into fundamental research.

The Institute of Physics is already highly active in promoting careers in science and would welcome the opportunity to work with other professional medical bodies in this area. It is also an area which the Discover Science and Engineering programme could develop.



2 National health research policy and strategy

Developing a coherent national policy

Questions arising

Would a forum of the type described in the consultation paper be best positioned to develop a coherent health research policy and strategy, or would another mechanism work better?

What challenges do you envisage in the operation of such a forum?

How would you/your organisation interact with this forum?

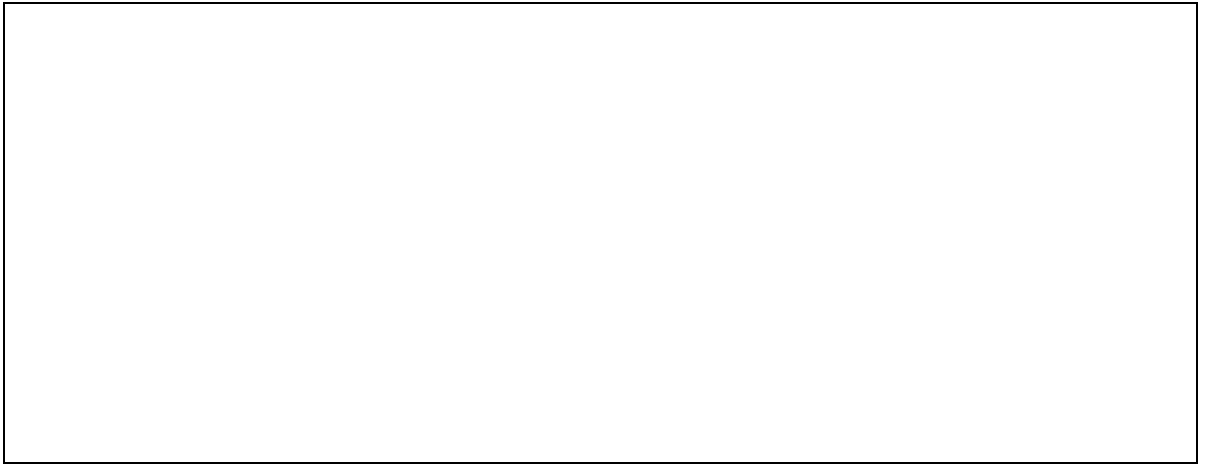
What changes would be needed elsewhere in the health research system to make such a forum effective?

What are the most important elements in the strategy for health research?

In attempting to achieve a coherent health research policy for Ireland it seems clear that some type of high level overarching body is required which connect the various agencies, funders and practitioners.

One important element in any strategy for health research is to recognize the importance of basic research as the fundamental basis for progress in other areas. Physics, in particular, is the building block for many of the most innovative areas of health research, for example in the medical device sector, imaging and radiation treatment. Given that it is frequently not possible to predict the new products and techniques which will emerge from basic research it is vital to ensure a secure stream of funding for basic research in physics and that research physicists are actively involved in the decision making process around health research.

The Institute of Physics in Ireland would certainly be willing to work with any such forum both in terms of providing supporting materials and especially in identifying key players in this area.



Integrated governance

Questions arising

What new forms of governance involving academia and hospitals would you propose to facilitate exploitation of the knowledge economy potential in health?

What difference would it make to you/your organisation?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

Funding - coordination, focus and balance

Questions arising

How do we determine the optimum funding level for health research in Ireland?

How best should translational and clinical research be funded?

What structures are needed to support health services and population health research?

What challenges can you identify in implementing a solution?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

What can you/your organisation contribute?

What additional resources would you/your organisation need in order to contribute optimally?

If no additional resources were available, how would you rebalance your activities/resources in order to meet this need?

3 Ensuring adequate human resources for health research

Clinical research in hospitals and other healthcare settings

Questions arising

What challenges do you envisage to the proposed strengthening of hospital-based research?

What organizational or other changes do you think are needed to bring this about?

What extra resources are needed to do this in a meaningful way?

What rebalancing of existing resources can you envisage in order to do this?

What do you think can be done to make health research in Ireland an attractive career path?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

How can we promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research in hospitals and other health-care settings?

Education of health professionals

Questions arising

Do you agree that all health professionals should have research experience?

What challenges do you envisage in achieving this?

What timescales do you think are realistic?

What institutional changes are needed to make this happen?

What new courses should be developed, and where?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

What other changes are needed?

4 Ensuring that health research produces innovation

Innovation management in hospitals

Questions arising

How can hospitals take more responsibility for identifying, protecting and exploiting intellectual property arising from research?

What type of arrangements between hospitals and between hospitals and universities might help this?

What mechanisms should they use to do so efficiently and effectively?

How can industry collaborate with the hospitals and universities to exploit IP for the benefit of patients, the health system and the economy?

What changes could you/your organisation make to accelerate or facilitate this process?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

What resources should be made available for this activity?

Infrastructure and facilities

Questions arising

Apart from those identified above, what facilities are needed to develop the Irish translational and clinical research capacity?

What resources should be made available for these facilities?

Where should they be located?

What can you/your organisation contribute to the build-up of these facilities?

Clinical trials

Questions arising:

How can Ireland streamline its regulatory and ethical approval processes for clinical trials?

How could the operation of the ethics committees be improved?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

Are there other regulatory or ethical issues that require to be addressed?

Promoting and developing translational capability

Questions arising

What are the policy requirements for Ireland to become a leader in translational medicine?

Can you identify best practice examples that might have national relevance?

What are the links between translational medicine and health services/health systems research?

What contribution can you/your organisation make to the realization of this ambition?

What changes would be needed within your organisation in order to maximise your contribution to this goal?

What changes would be needed in your external environment in order to maximise your contribution to this goal?