

## **IRISH HAEMOPHILIA SOCIETY**

**Wednesday 25 May 2003**

### **Hepatitis C Conference – Making Research Accessible To The Lay Person**

A major international conference on Hepatitis C begins tomorrow (Thursday 26 June) in Trinity College, Dublin. The Conference is organised in a unique way, with a programme for scientists and a programme for those facing the challenge of living with Hepatitis C. Many of the scientific speakers will also participate in the programme for those living with the disease and explain in plain language what the latest research and therapeutic discoveries mean. The conference, which is organised by the Consultative Council on Hepatitis C, has been planned closely with the Irish Haemophilia Society and the other support groups for those infected with HCV by blood products.

Dr Ruth Barrington, chair of the organizing committee, said 'This is a unique and exciting conference. We are not aware of any other conference that has tried to look at a disease from both the scientific and the patient's perspectives'.

Over 400 people attending the conference will hear some of the world's leading experts on the study and treatment of the Hepatitis C virus. Professor Kingston Mills of Trinity College Dublin will discuss how the virus manages to subvert the body's immune system, allowing it to remain in the host for decades gradually destroying the liver.

The potential for new drugs and new treatments will be examined by Professor John McHutchison of Duke University Medical Centre in North Carolina. One approach involves developing drugs that block the virus's ability to copy itself, thus preventing chronic disease.

Dr Paul O'Donoghue of the Central Remedial Clinic in Dublin will describe how stress can influence the progress of the disease and why controlling stress is so important. He will also discuss sexuality for patients who have the hepatitis C virus.

Professor Paul Klenerman of Oxford University will explain why some patients are able to clear the virus and avoid chronic disease. And Prof Pete Donaldson of the University of Newcastle will look at how the patient's own genetic make up can influence how the disease will progress, with some genes helping the person to cope better.

A number of speakers will share their experience of living with Hepatitis C including Bernard Smullen of the Irish Haemophilia Society. The conference will provide plenty of opportunities in plenary and workshop sessions for patients to interact with world experts and learn of exciting new developments in research and therapies.

'This conference will be a success if it brings hope to those with Hepatitis C that science and research will develop more effective ways of preventing and treating the disease. This is a goal shared by researchers, clinicians, public health experts and patients,' Dr Barrington said.

Margaret Dunne Administrator of the Irish Haemophilia Society said "The conference organizing committee has worked extremely hard to ensure the success of the conference. The "Living With Hepatitis C" programme has been carefully put together to ensure that not only those with Hepatitis C, their family members and representatives of support groups but also those involved in the management of health care and other services to this group of

people will gain a greater understanding of the particular problems faced by those living with the condition.

During the conference delegates can visit the Irish Haemophilia Society office in Trinity College Room 3070 for information on haemophilia and related bleeding disorders and the range of services provided by the Society.

**Ends**

**For further information contact Margaret Dunne, Administrator of the Irish Haemophilia Society at 01 8724466 or 087 2727183**