

## **Innovation needs to be focused on the needs of patients**

**November 2012**

The Annual meeting of the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) took place in Stillorgan, Co. Dublin on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November. The main message was that innovation in healthcare and in the pharmaceutical industry in particular, needs to be focused on the needs of patients.

The new IPHA President, Francis Lynch argued that, despite health budgets across the world being slashed, the research-based pharmaceutical industry must stay focused on the needs of patients. Austerity was inevitable due to the economic climate, however, the industry needed to be in a position to “bring to the market the cutting edge medicines and treatments of tomorrow”.

Citing the recent negotiation of a new supply agreement that will bring savings of over €400 million to the State, Mr. Lynch said that this demonstrated how the pharmaceutical industry was working with the State to allow for new and innovative medicines to be funded: “From the perspective of the patient, the agreement puts innovation on a far more secure footing and will ensure a timely access to new medicines”, he said.

Deputy Chief Executive Officer/ Director General Designate of the HSE, Mr. Tony O’Brien outlined that despite the enormous challenges facing the health services, especially in the area of funding, ongoing structural reform would lead to a better service for patients.

Mr. John McCormack, Irish Cancer Society Chief Executive, argued that too often the voice of the patient was not heard in the debate on healthcare expenditure, particularly regarding the value of new medications. In his view a more formal involvement by patients and their representatives needed be heard in considerations on how medicines are funded. The Director of the National Cancer Control Programme, Dr. Susan O’Reilly explained the challenges faced when bringing innovative cancer treatments to patients.

Neurologist and TCD academic, Prof Orla Hardiman outlined the strong link between innovation and better health outcomes. The meeting also heard from Prof Mark Ferguson, the Director General of Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Advisor to the Government. He spoke about how, despite the current economic challenges, support for innovation and research & development in particular, was a key aspect of Government policy on economic growth.

Professor Charles Normand, who is Edward Kennedy Chair in Health Policy and Management at TCD, contended that the economic crisis provided the health service with an opportunity for restructure and that better services to patients could be delivered at a lower cost.