

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 15TH
2025

LIVING WITH MS:
CONVERSATIONS ON CARE,
CONNECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

CORK INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

LIVING WITH MS: CONVERSATIONS ON CARE,
CONNECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH
CORK INTERNATIONAL HOTEL



AGENDA

9:00am

Registration open

10:00am

Welcome address (Ava Battles)

10:10am - 11:15am

Living with MS: Psychological Adjustments in a Changing Body
Prof Rona Moss-Morris

11:15am - 11:35pm

Movement and refreshment break (20 mins)

11:40am - 12:45pm

Think It, Plan It, Do It: The Power of Goal Setting
Judith Spring and panel discussion

12:45pm - 1:05pm

Research Updates
Launch of PROMISE project: Improving Mental Health Supports for People with
Multiple Sclerosis in Ireland
Dr Rebecca Maguire

Cognitive Occupation-Based program for people with Multiple Sclerosis with
Dr Sinead Hynes

1:05pm - 2:20pm

Lunch

2:30pm - 3:30pm

Parallel Sessions
Sexuality & MS: Changing Perspectives
Mary Leonard

A Holistic Approach to Managing MS Fatigue, Mental Health and Thinking Skills
Dr Fiadhnaít O'Keeffe

The Resilient Carer - An Interactive Workshop for Carers
Jackie Keogh

Moving Minds: The Mental Health Benefits of Physical Activity in MS
Dr Susan Coote

3:40pm - 3:45pm

Launch of Mood and Emotions publication
Aoife Kirwan

3:45pm - 4:30pm

Understanding MS Treatments: A Look at the Latest Developments
Prof Simon Cronin

4:30pm - 4:40pm

Close

MEET OUR SPEAKERS

PROF RONA MOSS-MORRIS

Rona Moss-Morris is Professor of Psychology as Applied to Medicine at the Institute of Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience, King's College London. She leads the digital therapy's theme within the National Institute of Health Research Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre.



She has been researching psychological factors that affect symptom experience and adjusting to chronic medical conditions, for the past 30 years. This research has been used to design cognitive behavioural interventions, including digital interventions, for a range of patient groups with a strong focus on people living with MS. Randomised controlled trials to test the clinical and cost effectiveness of these interventions form a key component of her research. More recently her work has turned towards implementation research to work with stakeholders in ensuring evidence based treatment become far more readily available to support people living with MS

In 2015 she was awarded the British Psychological Society Division of Health Psychology's Outstanding Contribution to Research Award and in 2020 the British Psychological Society Distinguished Contribution to Practice Award. Her work on Multiple Sclerosis (MS) was awarded the MS Society Annual Award for MS Research of the Year in 2013 and her work on irritable bowel syndrome, the King's Excellence in Innovation and Impact Award in 2019. She was National Advisor to NHS England for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies for People with Long Term and Medically Unexplained conditions from 2011-2016. She is a past editor of two international journals, Psychology and Health and Health Psychology Review.

JUDITH SPRING

Judith Spring works as a Personal, Executive, and Wellbeing Coach. She presents courses at Kingstown College, a leading educator of professional coaches and mentors. She develops and conducts programmes that support leaders in building relevant mindsets, skills, and presence for effective leadership.



Judith has more than 30 years of senior leadership experience in engineering, supply chain, and operations, providing her with insight into the challenges of meeting targets and managing teams. One of her focus areas is mentoring and coaching women to step up and become more confident and impactful leaders for their own benefit and for the benefit of the organisations they work in.

Judith also coaches teams to examine the effectiveness of their current patterns of thinking and behaviour, challenging them to use their strengths and resources to enhance their team processes, relationships, and performance.

She is a Professional Certified Coach with ICF and is committed to continuously building new skills and knowledge as a coach, with a particular interest in the link between neuroscience and coaching.

MARY LEONARD

Mary Leonard M.I.A.C.P. is a highly experienced Regional Community Worker with MS Ireland, where she has spent many years supporting people living with multiple sclerosis across the region.

Mary has particular expertise in the sensitive and often overlooked areas of sexuality, intimacy, and relationships.

She works closely with individuals and couples to navigate the impact MS can have on sexual health and emotional connection, offering guidance with empathy and respect. Mary also collaborates with multidisciplinary healthcare professionals (HCPs) to promote open, inclusive conversations about intimacy as a vital part of holistic MS care. Her work is grounded in person-centred practice, empowerment, and community engagement.

DR FIADHNAIT O'KEEFFE

Dr Fiadhnaít O'Keeffe is a Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology on the Doctorate Training Programme in Clinical Psychology at University College Cork. She established the Clinical Neuropsychology Service and held the role of Principal Specialist Clinical Neuropsychologist at St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin, specialising in MS, acquired brain injuries, stroke, epilepsies, movement disorders and neuropsychological assessment and rehabilitation.



Dr O'Keeffe's programme of applied clinical research focuses on mental health, cognitive and behavioural outcomes and interventions following neurological conditions, including MS. She has published over 100 journal articles in the areas of clinical neuropsychological assessment and intervention, mental health and physical health in neurological and health conditions and social inclusion and social justice. She is a strong advocate for public and patient involvement in research and teaching.

JACKIE KEOGH

Jackie Keogh is a dedicated Community Worker with MS Ireland, bringing over two decades of experience in supporting vulnerable individuals across community-based settings.



Since joining MS Ireland three years ago, Jackie has remained deeply committed to person-centred care, ensuring that those she supports are treated with dignity, empathy, and respect. She has a particular passion for promoting self-care and wellbeing, and brings practical, compassionate insights into how carers and communities can prioritise their own health while supporting others

DR SUSAN COOTE

Susan is the Exercise and Physiotherapy Coordinator in MS Ireland and a University of Limerick Adjunct Clinical Professor. She is a member of the UL Health Research Institute and the Centre for Physical Activity and Health Research. In her role, she translates the evidence for exercise and physiotherapy for MS into clinical practice, leading a team of directly employed physiotherapists as well as contracted physiotherapists, yoga instructors, and fitness instructors.



Previously, Susan was Associate Professor of Physiotherapy at the University of Limerick (UL), specialising in neurological rehabilitation. Appointed to UL in 2003, she taught and researched in neurological rehabilitation at undergraduate and postgraduate levels until 2019, and was Director of the MS Research Team at UL.

She currently leads a collaborative programme of work between MS Ireland, UL, and the HSE. Her research mission is “to reduce symptom severity and improve quality of life for people living with MS through research and education that impact on practice.”

Susan’s recent research has focused on the application of physiotherapy and exercise interventions for people living with MS across a range of mobility limitations, delivered in community healthcare settings. She has particular expertise in:

- Leading multicentre RCTs of exercise interventions
- Studying the effects of augmenting exercise with technology
- Evaluating measures of physical activity
- Conducting qualitative research on participant and carer perceptions of interventions

PROF SIMON CRONIN

Professor Simon Cronin is a Consultant Neurologist at Cork University Hospital and Honorary Clinical Professor at University College Cork. A graduate of University College Dublin, Professor Cronin completed his specialist training in Neurology in both Ireland and the UK.



From 2005 to 2008, he was awarded a prestigious Muscular Dystrophy Association Research Fellowship in the United States. During this time, he completed a PhD focused on genomics in neurodegenerative disorders—particularly ALS—through collaborative research at the National Institutes of Health in Maryland, Beaumont Hospital Dublin, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

Professor Cronin has published extensively in the fields of neurogenetics and genome-wide association studies in neurodegeneration. Following his PhD, he undertook a Clinical Fellowship in Neurology and Neurovascular Disorders at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University, before returning to Ireland to take up his current consultant post.

His specialist interests include neurogenetics, neurovascular neurology, peripheral neuropathies, and multiple sclerosis. Professor Cronin brings a deep understanding of both the scientific and clinical dimensions of neurological care, and is widely respected for his contributions to translational research and patient-centred practice.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Living with MS: Psychological Adjustments in a Changing Body

Professor Rona Moss-Morris will draw on her extensive research and clinical expertise to examine the psychological challenges of living with MS. Grounded in the latest evidence, this session will introduce approaches to adaptation and resilience, offering insights that may help participants understand and navigate the changes MS can bring.

Think It, Plan it, Do It: The Power of Goal Setting

Judith Spring will share her expertise on how effective goal setting can empower people with MS to manage challenges and build confidence. Drawing on her coaching experience and practical techniques, this session will demonstrate how structured planning can turn intentions into meaningful action.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Sexuality & MS: Changing Perspectives

Sexuality is an integral part of human identity and well-being, yet it is often overlooked in conversations about chronic illness.

In this session, Mary Leonard draws on her extensive experience working with people living with MS to explore the changing perspectives around sexuality, intimacy, and relationships.

The session will address the physical, emotional, and psychological impacts of MS on sexual health, and highlight the importance of open dialogue and inclusive, person-centred support. Attendees will gain insights into practical approaches for addressing these issues sensitively and effectively—both in clinical practice and community settings.

A Holistic Approach to Managing MS Fatigue, Mental Health and Thinking Skills

Fatigue, mood difficulties, and changes in thinking skills are among the most common and disabling symptoms experienced by people living with multiple sclerosis (MS).

In this session, Dr Fiadhnaith O’Keeffe will explore a holistic, person-centred approach to managing these overlapping challenges. Drawing on clinical neuropsychology and real-world case examples, the session will outline practical strategies to support cognitive function, improve emotional well-being, and address the complex impact of MS fatigue. Attendees will gain insights into the interplay between brain health, mental health, and lifestyle, and learn evidence-informed approaches to enhance daily functioning and quality of life for people with MS.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

The Resilient Carer – An Interactive Workshop for Carers

Caring for a loved one can be both deeply rewarding and profoundly challenging. This interactive workshop invites carers to explore the concept of resilience—how to recognise it, how it can be nurtured, and why it is vital for sustaining wellbeing in the face of ongoing demands.

Led by Jackie Keogh, the session will provide practical tools, reflective exercises, and opportunities for shared discussion. Participants will gain insights into recognising their own strengths, managing stress, the importance of having supportive networks, and leaving with strategies they can apply in daily life.

A Holistic Approach to Managing MS Fatigue, Mental Health and Thinking Skills

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SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Moving Minds: The Mental Health Benefits of Physical Activity in MS

Physical activity is more than just movement—it's medicine for the mind.

This session explores the growing evidence that exercise can reduce depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline in people living with MS.

Learn how tailored activity programmes can boost mood, resilience, and overall quality of life, and discover practical strategies to support mental wellbeing through movement.

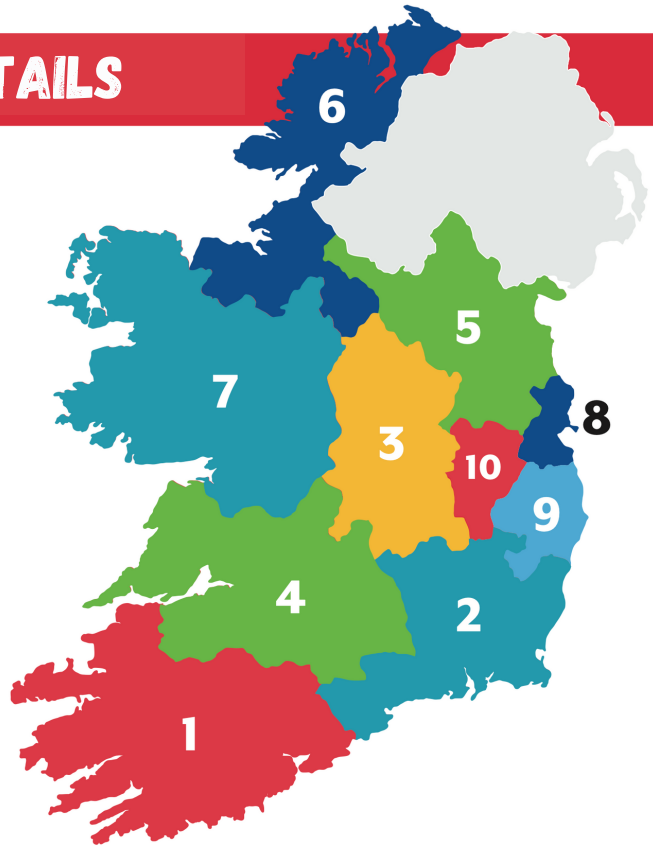
Understanding MS Treatments: A Look at the Latest Developments

In this session, Professor Cronin will explore the evolving landscape of treatments for MS, offering an accessible overview of current therapeutic options and recent advances. He will discuss the science behind disease-modifying therapies, emerging clinical trial data, and how treatment strategies are being tailored to improve outcomes and quality of life for people living with MS.

The session will also touch on challenges in treatment access and the importance of multidisciplinary care in managing this complex neurological condition.

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