

# Connect

ISSUE 16 - SEPTEMBER 2025

The MRII is committed to the promotion of professionalism and best practice for all Healthcare Industry Representatives.

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MRII



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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT PULSE 2025



Good afternoon everyone,

It is an incredible honour to stand before you today as the incoming President of the Medical Representatives' Institute of Ireland for 2025/2026.

I want to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Kathleen for her dedication, leadership, and the immense work she did to advance our organisation during her term. Kathleen's commitment, and indeed all 36 Presidents who have served before me, have set a strong foundation, and I am privileged to build upon it.

I joined the MRII in 2019 as one of its first Affiliate Members and after 32 years working in healthcare sales, with the past 2 years as an MRII Council member, I have seen firsthand the positive impact of a strong, connected professional community. The MRII is a vital network that connects, supports and educates healthcare sales professionals in Ireland.

As I step into the role of President, my top priority will be membership growth. If each current member invites just one new colleague to join, we can double our membership and further strengthen our professional community. One area of particular opportunity is our Affiliate Membership, offered to experienced healthcare sales representatives

with five or more years' experience customer facing in a healthcare setting - who do not require the MRII Examination.

This membership category is growing; I encourage all of us to actively promote it. By expanding our reach, we ensure that the MRII remains a provider of education, networking, and professional development for all those working in healthcare sales.

I want to take a moment to thank sincerely my colleagues at Pfizer and my manager, John Clarke, for their support—as I step into this role. Their encouragement reinforces the importance of collaboration and professional development for those in healthcare sales.

Together, we have an exciting year ahead. With your engagement and commitment, I have no doubt that we will continue to grow, evolve, and uphold the highest standards of excellence in our field.

Thank you for your trust, and I look forward to working with all of you in the year ahead.

John Halpin  
MRII President 2025-2026

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- Are you managing a customer facing team? Save the date for your team and join us on the day also.
- Are you considering a Healthcare Industry Representative role? This is a networking and learning opportunity for you.
- Companies seeking to showcase their business/service: Contact us at [info@mrii.ie](mailto:info@mrii.ie) for details and availability at this exclusive 2026 National Conference Trade Exhibition with quality networking opportunities.



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# A GUIDE TO DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFITS IN IRELAND



**William Murphy QFA/LIA/LIB/APA**  
 Qualified Financial Advisor  
 Jade Insurance Management DAC

You might have come across the term “Death in Service” benefit as part of your employment benefits package or after the death of a loved one. Here I will outline some basic information about group Death in Service benefits in Ireland, including what it typically includes and answer some frequently asked questions. A Death in Service benefit is a type of life assurance that provides money for your loved ones after you die. Many Irish employers provide a Death in Service benefit for their staff as part of their benefits package. This type of life insurance is provided as part of a group plan, which is often connected to a retirement plan. However, it can also be offered as a separate plan, without any connection to a pension scheme. It serves a similar purpose to a personal life assurance plan but there are some slight differences. Many people choose to have a combination of Death in Service benefits and personal life insurance plans, along with mortgage protection to meet their overall life insurance needs. As a Financial Advisor I can answer any questions you might have about your life insurance needs and help you find the right plan. Book a call using the email/mobile number below.

## WHAT IS A DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFIT?

Some employers provide Death in Service benefits for their employees as part of their benefits package. You might even already have this benefit as part of your overall package without realising it. Usually, these benefits are connected to a pension plan offered by your employer, but it is not a must-have requirement. The money paid out as a benefit is described in the rules of the plan, which is managed by a group of people called the Trustees. Death in Service benefits usually provide a one-time payment (a “lump-sum”) after you die. However, some plans provide a combination of a lump-sum payment and a pension for your loved ones. Check with your employer to see what benefits are covered by your plan. The benefits are often tied to your salary, which helps comply with the maximum benefit limits set by the tax authority (Revenue). For example, a typical benefit would be: Sinead’s salary is €45,000 per year and she has a Death in

Service benefit of four times her salary. If she dies whilst still in service, €180,000 will be paid to her estate. The benefits will be paid out if you pass away while you are still working for your employer. Most plans have a certain age limit beyond which the coverage stops. Also, it doesn’t matter if the cause of death was related to your job or not.

## WHO RECEIVES DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFITS?

Having life insurance, like Death in Service benefits, is a way to make sure your family is taken care of if you pass away. After your death, the benefits are paid out to your estate. Usually, this means the money will go to your spouse or children. This can help them with expenses like funeral costs or bills. There is no “one case fits all” approach for who receives it, as it can vary based on your personal circumstances, including whether you have a will or other dependents to take into account. This is why it is important to know the details of your plan to know who gets the money and how it will be given to them. It is also a good idea to check your insurance regularly to make sure it still meets your needs.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFITS AND PERSONAL LIFE INSURANCE PLANS?

The purpose of both Death in Service benefits and personal life insurance is that they can help your loved ones after you die. A Death in Service benefit can only be provided through your employer and is linked to your service with that employer, but you can take out a personal life insurance plan yourself. Personal life insurance plans are individually underwritten. This means that when you apply for personal life insurance, the life assurance company will look at things like your health and lifestyle in setting the terms for your cover. Typically, some minimum level of cover is provided under a Death in Service plan without any underwriting, so you can avail of some minimum level of cover without having to go through a medical exam or answer health questions.

## WHAT LEVEL OF BENEFITS ARE COVERED UNDER DEATH IN SERVICE IN IRELAND?

When you die, the money from your Death in Service benefits can be given to your loved ones in two ways: all at once as a lump sum or as a monthly payment, like a pension. The amount and way that it is paid out is set out in the plan rules and overseen by a group of people called the Trustees. The amount of money that your loved ones will receive, and how it will be paid, is usually based on your salary. For example, a typical lump sum benefit is four times the amount of your salary. There are Revenue rules that apply to the benefits payable under Death in Service plans. The lump sum paid out can’t be any more than four times the employee’s salary.

## IS DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFIT TAXABLE?

Depending on your circumstances, Revenue allows a maximum of four times your salary to be paid out tax-free as a lump sum after your death. Depending on who receives the lump sum after your death they may have an inheritance tax liability, so it is best they seek independent tax advice.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFITS AND LIFE INSURANCE INCLUDE:

DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFIT:	LIFE INSURANCE:
Provided by your employer as part of a group plan	Provided by your own personal plan
The employer pays for the cover	You pay for the cover yourself
Typically, some level of benefit is provided without underwriting	Each plan is individually underwritten
The benefit ceases if you leave that job	You choose how long the plan lasts, and it is not tied to your employment
The benefits are set out in the plan rules and are often a multiple of your salary	You choose the amount of cover to suit your needs
An individual cannot typically change the terms or level of cover	You have more control and flexibility to set and change your level of cover

## MAIN TAKEAWAYS ON DEATH IN SERVICE AND LIFE INSURANCE

It is common for many people to have life insurance coverage as part of their job benefits. To find out if you have a Death in Service benefit and what it covers, you should check with your employer. This information will let you know what kind of financial protection your loved ones will have in case you die. Getting the right life insurance for you and your family depends on your specific needs and situation. There are many different insurance plans available, each with different levels of cover. A Death in Service benefit from your employer can be an important part of your overall insurance plan, but it is important to also consider other options and make sure you have the right amount of cover for your loved ones. You may also want to consider getting a separate personal life insurance plan to make sure your family is taken care of in case of your death. This type of plan can give you more control over the benefits you provide for your loved ones. Additionally, some life insurance plans offer extra benefits.

For example, “specified illness cover” is an optional benefit available on a selection of insurance plans available from Life Assurance Companies. Specified illness cover pays a lump sum if you are diagnosed with an illness covered by the plan. So, if you’re not able to work because of your illness, or need to adjust your home with modifications like stair lifts and shower supports, that money is there to help.

Figuring out your life insurance needs can seem daunting, and it is not something you have to figure out alone. Whether you are looking for protection for your family or are simply curious about your options, our expert advisors at Jade Insurance Management DAC are on hand to help.

**Get straightforward financial advice from William Murphy on life insurance by booking a phone or video call. A discounted rate is available to MRII members.**

[william@jadeinsurance.ie](mailto:william@jadeinsurance.ie)  
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# THE IMPACT OF SLEEP ON WORK PERFORMANCE

Tom Coleman is one of the confirmed speakers at Pulse 2026.



Tom Coleman  
Health Scientist & Sleep Coach

In the past sleep has been misunderstood and undervalued in the pursuit of productivity and success. Influential figures like Thomas Edison and Margaret Thatcher famously boasted about needing very little of it, while today's hustle culture still celebrates grind over recovery. But science tells us a different story. Far from being a passive state, sleep is a highly active process, critical to brain function, emotional regulation, decision-making, and physical recovery. When it comes to sustainable high performance, sleep isn't a luxury. It's a necessity.

## THE SILENT PERFORMANCE KILLER

Sleep deprivation isn't just about feeling tired. It's a physiological state that impacts nearly every aspect of human functioning. From memory and focus to emotional regulation and physical health, inadequate sleep diminishes our cognitive and physiological capacity — often without us even realising it. A 2016 study published in *The Lancet* found that sleep-deprived individuals scored worse on attention, working memory, and reaction times than someone who was legally intoxicated. In other words: if you wouldn't come to work drunk, you shouldn't come in sleep-deprived either.

## COGNITIVE DECLINE AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

When we don't get enough sleep, particularly deep sleep (slow wave) and REM (dream) sleep we see a marked drop in executive function. This includes:

- Attention & concentration
- Decision-making
- Creative problem solving
- Working memory

The prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for rational thinking and planning, is particularly sensitive to sleep loss. Sleep deprivation impairs this area significantly, while ramping up activity in the amygdala, the emotional response centre. This can result in overreacting, misreading social cues, and increased interpersonal conflict — hardly ideal for teamwork and leadership.

## THE BUSINESS COST OF POOR SLEEP

The economic impact of sleep deprivation is staggering. A 2017 report by RAND Europe estimated that sleep deprivation costs the Irish economy €1.5 billion per year due to reduced productivity, absenteeism, and accidents. On a personal level, sleep-deprived employees are more likely to make mistakes, take longer to complete tasks, struggle with motivation and be absent more due to illness. Even mild, consistent sleep restriction — like getting just 6 hours a night

instead of 7 or 8 — has a cumulative effect that reduces performance over time. Alarming, studies show people often don't notice this decline because they adapt to feeling tired and begin to normalise suboptimal functioning.

## THE LINK BETWEEN SLEEP AND LEADERSHIP

Leaders and managers set the tone for their teams — and their own sleep habits matter. Research from *Harvard Business Review* showed that sleep-deprived leaders are less charismatic, less able to inspire others, and worse at managing conflict. Their teams, in turn, mirror those behaviours. In high-pressure roles, the margin for error shrinks. A lack of sleep reduces risk assessment ability, making leaders more prone to impulsive or conservative decisions. It also impairs empathy, a key skill in emotionally intelligent leadership.

## THE PHYSIOLOGY OF PERFORMANCE

Sleep is when the brain and body undergo critical processes for recovery and optimisation:

**Memory consolidation:** During sleep, especially REM, your brain processes and stores information, making learning and skill development possible.

**Hormonal balance:** Sleep regulates cortisol (stress hormone), ghrelin and leptin (hunger hormones), and growth hormone — all of which affect mood, energy, metabolism, and appetite.

**Immune repair:** Deep sleep boosts immune function and cellular repair, helping us fight off illness and recover faster.

**Mental reset:** During sleep, the glymphatic system clears waste from the brain — including beta-amyloid, a substance linked to Alzheimer's disease<sup>1</sup>. Without enough quality sleep, these systems are not given the opportunity to repair, balance and restore homeostasis — and so our ability to perform suffers.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP

Here are some evidence-based strategies individuals can implement immediately:

**Consistent schedule:** Where possible go to bed and wake at the same time, even on weekends.

**Limit caffeine:** Avoid caffeine after 2pm or 10 hours before sleep time to protect your sleep quality.

**Wind-down routine:** Create a 30- 60-minute buffer before bed with low light, no screens, and calming activities.

**Control your sleep environment:** Keep your room cool, dark, and quiet. Use blackout curtains, eye mask and ear plugs if needed.

**Get morning light:** Natural light in the morning helps anchor your circadian rhythm.

**Watch alcohol intake:** Alcohol may help you fall asleep but disrupts deep and REM sleep later in the night.

**Avoid heavy meals late at night:** Digestive activity can interfere with quality rest.

## CONCLUSION: SLEEP IS YOUR SUPERPOWER

In the world of performance — whether in sport, business, or everyday life — sleep is the great multiplier. It enhances everything: memory, focus, mood, creativity, resilience, and protects health. At the end of the day, success, health and high performance doesn't belong to the busiest — it belongs to those who strategise for recovery optimally.

<sup>1</sup>: Reddy, O. C., & van der Werf, Y. D. (2020). The sleeping brain: Harnessing the power of the glymphatic system through lifestyle choices. *Brain Sciences*, 10(11), 868. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci10110868>

# RESETTING THE SYSTEM: DELIVERING FAIRER AND FASTER ACCESS TO MEDICINES FOR IRISH PATIENTS



Jim McGrath,  
Director of Commercial Policy, IPHA

Access to innovative medicines is fundamental to any high-functioning health system. From oncology to rare diseases, pharmaceutical advances have reshaped the treatment landscape, offering patients longer lives, better outcomes, and improved quality of life. Yet, despite these breakthroughs, Irish patients continue to face some of the longest waits in Europe to access new medicines.

IPHA's recent position paper, *Fairer and Faster Access to Medicines*, highlights the need for urgent reform of Ireland's reimbursement system. Between 2022 and 2024, 88 medicines reimbursed through the current system took on average, 426 days of HSE processing time—nearly double the 225-day standard based on statutory and operational commitments. For medicines requiring a full Health Technology Assessment (HTA), timelines rose to an average of 593 days. For oncology and orphan medicines—where time is often critical—access delays exceeded two years in some cases.

This is not a question of funding alone. While the State has increased its investment in medicines to over €3 billion annually, the bottlenecks persist. The root causes lie in a system that is not designed, resourced, or governed to deliver timely access. The 2013 Health Act requires reimbursement decisions within 180 days (excluding company clock stops), and the 2021 IPHA Framework Agreement commits to implementation within a further 45 days. However, these commitments are rarely met in practice.

The impact of these delays can be highly significant. Patients lose valuable treatment time, which can lead to avoidable disease progression, reduced quality of life, and increased hospitalisation. Clinicians face difficult conversations and choices. Public-private disparities widen, with some patients accessing medicines privately long before they become available in the public system. This reality runs counter to the Government's commitment to Sláintecare and the principle of equitable, timely access to care for all.

Despite these challenges, progress is possible. The Department of Health's Statement of Strategy 2023–2025 rightly emphasises the need to make access to care fairer and faster. For medicines, achieving this requires a system that functions as a true partnership between State and industry—transparent, data-driven, and focused on patients.

The current IPHA Framework Agreement on Pricing and Supply of Medicines is due to expire at the end of September 2025. As we approach negotiations with the State, IPHA is advocating for a reset of the reimbursement system.

## OUR PROPOSALS ARE BUILT ON FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES:

**1- Timely Access:** A commitment to defined, policy-led timelines following regulatory approval, ensuring a steady stream of therapeutic innovation reaches patients without undue delay.

**2- Expenditure Predictability:** A stable and sustainable medicines budget that recognises the value of innovation while ensuring affordability for the State.

**3- Transparency and Communication:** Clear, accountable processes and open engagement between all stakeholders, with public reporting on timelines and outcomes.

**4- Linking Financial Measures to Access Efficiency:** Incentivising process improvements that accelerate patient access, ensuring value for investment and better health outcomes.

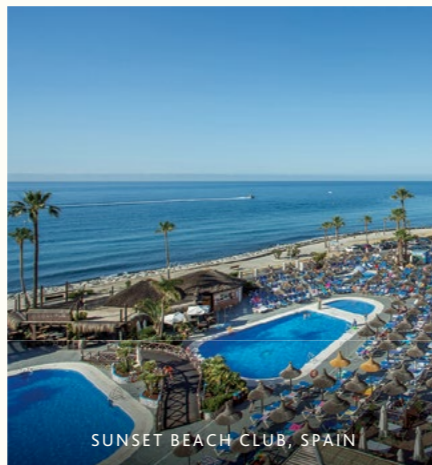
**5- Structured Dialogue:** Formal, scheduled engagement between the Department of Health, the HSE, and industry, to collaboratively address challenges and opportunities.

IPHA member companies are ready to be active partners in building a better system. We acknowledge our role in minimising submission and negotiation timelines and support the State's need for robust assessment and cost-effective decision-making. But these shared responsibilities must be matched by a system capable of delivering on its legislative and policy commitments.

Ultimately, delivering fairer and faster access is not just a healthcare issue—it is a moral and societal imperative. Every day lost to unnecessary delay is a day when a patient may miss out on a life-changing or life-saving treatment. By working together, guided by evidence and focused on people, we can make Ireland a leader—not a laggard—in access to innovation.



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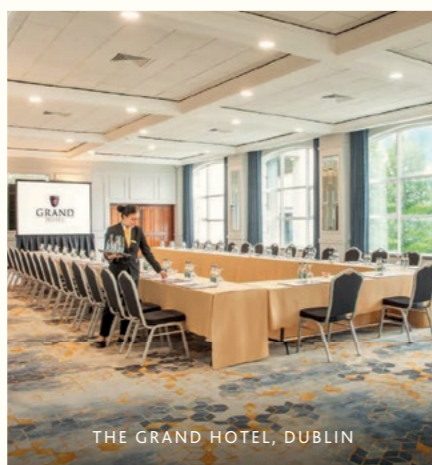
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# MEET MRII MEMBER SINEAD KEARNEY



*Sinead Kearney  
Medical Sales Representative, Pamex Limited*

## CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE AND THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR?

I work for a family owned Irish company called Pamex Limited, which is based in Castlebar in Co. Mayo and founded by Tom and Mary Murphy in 1995. My work involves visiting medical professionals in primary and secondary care, covering the Northwest and Midlands region.

The therapeutic areas I cover are Gastroenterology, Urology, Endocrinology and Oncology. I like the fact that there is a lot of variety in my role and no two days are ever the same. I love my work and it's great to know that my products, in addition to the well-researched information I provide, help Doctors make informed decisions which lead to better patient outcomes. Working in this role makes me appreciate the positive impact I can actually have on patients' lives.

The culture of Pamex Limited, which celebrates its 30th birthday later this year, has been heavily influenced by core family values, and as such it really feels like a big extended family. With Cormac Kearney our CEO and the entire team of 25 personnel helping to drive the range of products and services offered by Pamex, collaboration and teamwork are a critical part of our success. The extensive range of products and services offered by Pamex Limited are in the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy sectors and there are a number of innovative products being added to the current portfolio for launch in the next 6 to 12 months.

Overall, my role in Pamex is certainly fulfilling and worthwhile and I'm proud and happy to work for such a great Irish company.

## WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE MRII?

I joined the MRII in 2007 when I first began my journey as a medical sales representative. Joining the MRII is a smart step for anyone working in medical sales, whether you are just starting out, or advancing your career and yourself professionally. It offers professional development and valuable educational and networking opportunities, for recognition that sets you apart.

I passed the MRII exam in 2007 the same year that I joined. This is an optional step for MRII members.

Earlier this year I was nominated to join the MRII council, and I feel privileged to be on board.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I enjoy spending time with my husband, our three dogs Rogue, Shadow, and Storm (I swear we are not X-Men fans), family and friends. In terms of podcasts, I listen to 'Future Proof' with Jonathan McCrea. I love listening to him as he has a diverse range of talks from 'Why newborns feel pain differently to adults' to 'can we programme life like software' to 'is the earth's core leaking.' I find it very fascinating and helps pass the time while I am mowing the lawn!

I also enjoy reading my kindle, going to Pilates, as my Mum calls it, 'bending like a pretzel' (which I can't) to walking in nature and meditation.

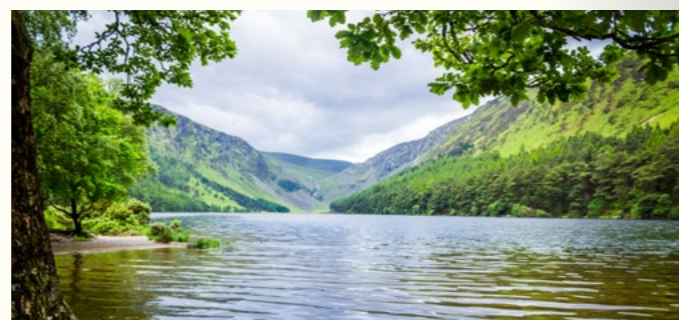
## DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE PLACE TO STAY IN IRELAND?

Wicklow is my favourite place to stay in Ireland. It is known as the garden county. I have fond associations with Wicklow, as I grew up there.

Everywhere in Wicklow is beautiful from Glendalough to the beautiful beaches of Brittas Bay to Powerscourt House and Gardens, Golf courses, Woodenbridge, Macreddin, The European to name a few. Wicklow has the oldest mill in Ireland 'The Avoca Handweavers'. Being the sunny southeast has better weather too. Obviously, I am biased. If you would like any good recommendations contact me!

## DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE QUOTE?

*"Every day is a learning day".*



*Glendalough, Co Wicklow*

# MEET A MANAGER SHARON RICE



*Sharon Rice  
General Manager, Allphar*

## CAN YOU SHARE A BIT ABOUT YOUR CAREER JOURNEY AND HOW YOU CAME TO BE THE GENERAL MANAGER OF ALLPHAR?

I hold a BSc and MSc in Pharmaceutical Chemistry, which ignited a lifelong passion for science. I began my career in research, but quickly realised I missed the human interaction and communication that come with more customer-facing roles. This led me to transition into the pharmaceutical industry as a Medical Representative—a move that opened doors to various commercial roles including Product Manager and National Sales Manager. Following a redundancy, I joined United Drug, where I spent 12 years in the Supply Chain sector. This experience broadened my understanding of pharmaceutical logistics and operations, ultimately preparing me for my current position. I have also spent the past 10 years involved with the PMI and I am privileged to have taken up the role as president for this year. It is an organisation that allows education and networking for managers in the pharmaceutical sector.

## WHAT ARE THE CURRENT TRENDS IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY THAT EXCITE YOU THE MOST?

The Irish pharmaceutical industry is currently undergoing dynamic transformation, driven by the adoption of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), it is changing the pharmaceutical sector in Ireland. One of the most exciting developments is the growing shift toward personalised medicine. This evolution is not only revolutionising how treatments are developed and delivered but also holds the potential to significantly improve patient outcomes and quality of life.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE IN YOUR ROLE?

One of the most significant challenges facing the pharmaceutical industry is the range of environmental factors that impact the supply of medicine. These challenges span across the entire value chain — from manufacturing and logistics to regulatory compliance and market dynamics. At the heart of this challenge is a human issue. In a fast-paced and high-stakes environment, the ability to attract, develop, and retain skilled employees is critical.

## HOW DO YOU FORESEE THE PHARMACEUTICAL LANDSCAPE CHANGING IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Ireland's pharmaceutical landscape is poised for significant transformation in the coming years. As a global hub for life sciences, the country is uniquely positioned to leverage emerging technological advancements, adapt to evolving regulatory frameworks, and respond to dynamic market demands. This is all driven by technological advancements, regulatory changes, and evolving market dynamics.

## HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN A WORK-LIFE BALANCE, ESPECIALLY IN A HIGH-DEMAND ROLE?

For me, it's all about prioritisation and staying organised. I rely on to-do lists to make sure the most important tasks are completed efficiently. When I get home, I try to include an activity that helps clear my head and reset — it's my way of preparing mentally and emotionally for the next day. At the end of the working day, I enjoy getting out for a run.

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY?

Having started my career in research, working to develop a medicine for asthma sufferers, I was naturally drawn to the pharmaceutical industry. What I discovered was an environment full of opportunity and driven, like-minded individuals — all united by a common purpose: ensuring patients receive the best possible medicines.

## WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT LIVING AND WORKING IN IRELAND?

Having family close by is great. I believe it is a country of opportunity once you go out and look for them.

## WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES OR INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I enjoy running and swimming to keep fit and it is a great way to get some time to myself. In the winter I love to escape to ski resorts, it is amazing how the mountain air leaves you refreshed.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE ASPIRING TO REACH A LEADERSHIP POSITION IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY?

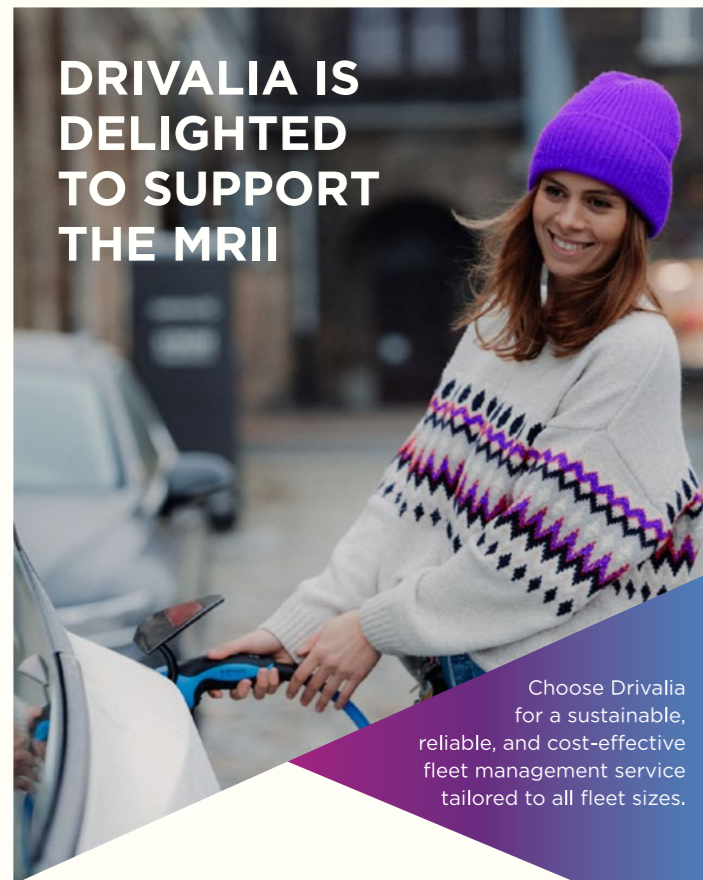
Be honest with yourself and question the why of what you are doing. Having a good mentor and ensuring that this person will challenge the status quo. Networking is an important part of this industry, not only for education but also will help you expand your view of how things are done. Engaging with others can expose you to new strategies, insights, and opportunities you might not encounter on your own. Success doesn't come to those who wait, it comes to those who seek, explore, and take initiative.

## HOW DO YOU STAY MOTIVATED DURING CHALLENGING TIMES?

I sometimes think about a quote from Steve Jobs — "The only way to do great work is to love what you do." I know what we do on a daily basis helps patients and that gives a sense of enormous satisfaction, and sometimes to get there we need to move mountains.

## WHAT IS ONE THING ABOUT YOU THAT MIGHT SURPRISE YOUR COLLEAGUES?

I live on a farm in North Dublin and have been known to drive a tractor !!



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# YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WON'T SCHEDULE ITSELF – HOW TO FIT YOUR CPD INTO A BUSY SCHEDULE



*Frank C Guy  
Leadership and Performance Coach*

## WHEN YOU'RE PLANNING YOUR SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK/MONTH, HOW MUCH ARE YOU PUTTING ASIDE FOR YOUR OWN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)?

I'm one of many who left this to last, or sometimes left CPD out altogether. And like it, or not, there's really only one person who truly cares in that investment of your time. Happily, I did wake up and prioritise my own development, and see it now as a lifelong commitment. Furthermore, I urge all my clients to be selfish about their CPD, make it a priority.

So, what steps bring this to reality? I suggest three.

### MAKE A PLAN 6 TO 18 MONTHS OUT

I advocate the use of the 10-20-70 principle:  
10% some form of training or tuition, perhaps some technical or skills areas which will align to future career ambitions. Development isn't about going on a course, hence only 10% of the time you invest here.

20% being coached or mentored. If your organisation has an internal coaching resource then avail of it and get yourself a coach. An alternative is to look for an external coach; this is where I'm typically called in to support people as an objective outsider. A mentor can be hugely valuable also, the support of a person in your organisation who can share their knowledge and experience, a relationship which can last for many years ahead.

70% learning, practicing what's been learned in the training above, and developing self: this might include 'desk time' reading books and articles, listening to relevant podcasts, watching TEDX talks, online research. Importantly, it should also include getting out to conferences, seminars and network events; if your normal work is field or office based then getting out is really vital, opens up the mind, becomes a source for creativity and innovation. Prioritise the MRII conference! Pulse National Medical Sales Conference (see page 3).

### SCHEDULE DEVELOPMENT MEETINGS

In my experience, the majority of conversations people have with their Leader revolve around performance. These conversations centre on results, targets, metrics, KPI's or projects.

The focus of the performance conversations is on WHAT you are doing. And the performance conversations are entirely necessary. The conversations I see lacking or entirely absent centre on development, which is about HOW you're doing: about behaviours, processes and procedures, compliance, living the organisation's values. And the development conversations should also be about your development plan itself (above), how you're getting on, what support you need to fulfil it; when you fulfil your development plan it should underpin your future performance.

At best I see these conversations with your Leader as taking place every 6 to 8 weeks in a quiet undisturbed place, maybe off-site, and could last an hour or even more. There's no need for paperwork or laptops as it's a dialogue between two adults. This should include how are we getting on together, what's working well, where could we both improve, what support you would like. It's the opportunity to share feedback with one another, in both directions.

### MOVE IT FROM PLAN TO EXECUTION

You've got a clear plan, and your Leader's support, now make it happen! Sometimes it's execution that lets us down, so I suggest a few simple ways to close the gap:

Include your development plan alongside the document in which you record your performance plan (objectives, goals) so it gets the same weight. As these are often prepared annually, I recommend breaking each down to what you'll accomplish a month ahead: the slices of your development plan you'll tackle in that period alongside the tasks within your performance plan.

Now schedule each slice in whatever system you use to plan your time, a diary or calendar. Allocate time slots a week or 10 days out to each slice, maybe blocking time so others can see you're busy and don't steal that from you – now you're getting selfish! It's your priority so defend it and invest in yourself.

Finally, review your plan at the end of that month (a journal is ideal for this): what's been a success, what learning can you take from that investment in your own development, and what can you do to accomplish more next month.

Frank C Guy is a Leadership and Performance Coach with a corporate background in Pharmaceuticals and Consumer Goods. Based in Tipperary, Frank supports clients around Ireland and across Europe as a Coach and also as a trainer, facilitator and guest speaker. His practice specialises in leadership and motivating teams, building relationships toward selling and influencing, and how we cope effectively with events which are not in our control. He is an Associate Coach with Harmonics and guest lecturer with New Frontiers in TUS, and School of Pharmacy, Trinity College Dublin

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# GUT HEALTH ON THE GO: EXPERT TIPS FOR BUSY LIVES



*Lorraine Cooney is a leading gut health expert at Dublin's Blackrock Clinic, where she heads both the Gut Health Clinic and the dietetics department. With a career spanning over two decades in nutrition and dietetics, Lorraine is the author of 'Gut Feeling' a low FODMAP guide and cookbook and 'Why You Can't Go', a practical guide to understanding and managing constipation.*

## CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT WHY YOU GOT INTO THIS AREA?

I have always had a passion for nutrition and gut health, and I have worked in this area for over 20 years. I specialise in supporting people with IBS, IBD, and complex gut symptoms using a whole-body approach. That includes evidence-based dietary strategies and behavioural interventions like gut-directed hypnotherapy to support gut health and the gut-brain axis.

## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF A DIETITIAN?

As dietitians, we translate nutrition science into practical, real-world advice. In gut health, that means identifying food triggers, supporting digestive function, developing tailored plans before and after surgery when needed, and improving symptoms and quality of life through personalised guidance. It's not just about what you eat — it's also about when, how, and why certain foods support or challenge your gut.

## IS IT TRUE THAT GUT HEALTH AFFECTS MOOD AND ENERGY LEVELS — AND IF SO, HOW CAN I USE NUTRITION TO HELP WITH THAT ON BUSY DAYS?

Absolutely. There's a strong connection between the gut and the brain — known as the gut-brain axis. When gut-brain communication is disrupted, the brain can misinterpret normal gut activity as pain or danger. Likewise, an imbalanced gut can send signals that affect mood, energy, and symptoms. To support both gut and brain on busy days, aim for a wide variety of plant-based foods — wholegrains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and pulses — alongside good quality protein, healthy fats like oily fish and extra virgin olive oil. Regular meals are also key; long gaps between eating can trigger energy dips and digestive discomfort.

## WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 3 TIME-SAVING TIPS FOR PREPPING HEALTHY MEALS OR SNACKS AHEAD OF A TRAVEL-HEAVY WEEK?

1. Batch cook a base like quinoa, brown rice, or roasted veg — then add protein and dressing for quick meals.
2. Snack pack: Portion out nuts, boiled eggs, or oat bars into grab-and-go bags.
3. Portable fermented dairy foods: Keep a small tub of natural yoghurt or kefir with fruit in cooler bags — they travel better than you'd think and support gut health on the move.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS HYDRATION FOR NUTRITION AND GUT HEALTH AND ARE THERE SMARTER WAYS TO HYDRATE THAN JUST DRINKING WATER?

Hydration is essential, especially for digestion and preventing constipation. While plain water is ideal, other fluids like herbal teas, milk-based drinks, and even water-rich foods like fruit also count. Moderate amounts of caffeine aren't dehydrating, so your coffee or teas contribute too, just try not to rely solely on caffeine for your fluid intake. If you're very active or sweating heavily, an electrolyte drink can be useful.

## ARE PROTEIN BARS OR SHAKES A HELPFUL ADDITION, OR DO THEY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD FOR THE GUT?

It really depends on the product. Many protein bars contain artificial sweeteners like sorbitol or xylitol, which can trigger bloating or diarrhoea — especially in sensitive guts. Look for options with simple, recognisable ingredients, minimal additives, and ideally a bit of fibre. If using protein powder, choose one with minimal ingredients and no artificial sweeteners — whey isolate, pea, or rice protein can be well tolerated for many people. A homemade protein shake made with Greek or Skyr yoghurt, fruit, seeds, and nuts can be a far more gut-friendly and nourishing alternative.

## HOW CAN I MANAGE SUGAR CRAVINGS OR ENERGY DIPS MID-AFTERNOON WITHOUT RELYING ON CAFFEINE OR CHOCOLATE?

Pair protein with fibre, like apple and peanut butter, yoghurt and seeds, or a boiled egg with oat cakes. These steady your blood sugar and keep you fuller longer. Also, don't underestimate a walk in fresh air or a glass of water — fatigue and dehydration can mimic hunger or cravings.

## ARE THERE ANY RED-FLAG INGREDIENTS IN CONVENIENCE FOODS THAT I SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR FROM A GUT HEALTH PERSPECTIVE?

Based on what we currently know, it's best to focus on mostly whole foods and limit highly processed packaged items, though not all packaged foods are unhealthy! The main concern lies with ultra-processed products, especially those with long ingredient lists (often five or more) and high levels of emulsifiers or additives, which may negatively impact gut health. That said, we still need more high-quality human studies to fully understand their effects.

Rather than stressing over every label, aim to fill your trolley with mostly whole or minimally processed foods, you're more likely to eat these kinds of foods during the week, and that consistency is what truly supports better gut health over time. Focus on inclusion rather than exclusion, it's a healthier, more sustainable mindset.

## HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY GUT AFTER A FEW DAYS OR WEEKS OF LESS-THAN-IDEAL EATING ON THE ROAD?

Focus on recovery, not restriction. Gently reintroduce fibre and aim to include a wider variety of plant-based foods, that message never gets old! Stay well hydrated, get some movement in, prioritise 7–9 hours of quality sleep, and carve out time to relax. These simple shifts can make a big difference, as sleep and stress levels directly impact your gut too.

## IS INTERMITTENT FASTING HELPFUL OR HARMFUL WHEN I OFTEN SKIP MEALS UNINTENTIONALLY DUE TO WORK?

Unintentional fasting or skipping meals can place stress on both the gut and blood sugar regulation. While structured intermittent fasting may benefit some, it's not ideal if your eating pattern is already inconsistent or unpredictable. Instead, prioritise regular, consistent meal timing, this helps support more stable energy levels and optimises gut function.

## WHAT ONE CHANGE DO YOU THINK WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE TO SOMEONE LIKE ME, BALANCING GUT HEALTH WITH A HECTIC SCHEDULE?

Consistency might sound boring, but it's what truly works. Eating at regular times or simply keeping a snack on hand for when your day doesn't go to plan, helps support digestion, blood sugar balance, and your gut's natural rhythm. One consistent habit can have a powerful ripple effect on your overall gut health.

## SHOULD I TAKE PROBIOTICS? WHY ARE THESE OFTEN BEING RECOMMENDED TO ME?

Probiotics can be helpful in certain situations, particularly for antibiotic associated diarrhoea or for managing specific IBS symptoms. But not all strains work for all conditions. It's definitely not a one-size-fits-all solution; the benefits depend on the specific strain, the dose, and your individual gut needs. A food-first approach is always a smart place to start (remember that advice about eating a wide variety of plant-based foods!). And if you're considering a probiotic, look for one with clinical evidence behind it.

## HOW DOES NUTRITION HELP IN BUILDING MUSCLE MASS?

Muscle growth depends on consistent protein intake, regular strength training, and getting enough overall calories. Spreading protein evenly across meals, including breakfast can really make a difference. But more isn't always better; it's about finding the right balance. Carbohydrates matter too, especially from plant-based sources (yes, those again!) like wholegrains, fruits, and legumes. They fuel your workouts, support recovery, help your body use protein effectively, and play a key role in gut and metabolic health.

## IS THE HSE SUPPORTING NUTRITIONAL CAMPAIGNS?

Yes, the HSE supports public health campaigns like Healthy Ireland, which promote better eating habits, reduce sugar, and salt intake, and encourage physical activity. There's growing focus on the impact of diet on long-term disease risk too.

## WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU COULD OFFER PEOPLE WHO ARE EXPOSED TO FAST/UNHEALTHY FOOD CHOICES BECAUSE OF THEIR ROLE?

Plan ahead where you can, even having a go-to list of better choices at service stations or airports can make a big difference. Look for meals with lean protein, wholegrains, and hopefully some veg! And if you're stuck with less-than-ideal options, don't stress, one meal won't make or break your gut health. It's the overall consistency of your dietary pattern over time that matters most, not any single meal or snack.

## IS GOOD NUTRITION EXPENSIVE?

It's definitely more challenging with the cost-of-living crisis, food prices have surged, and that can make healthy choices feel out of reach. But there are still smart, budget-friendly options. Canned beans and lentils, frozen fruits and vegetables, oats, eggs, and yoghurt are all affordable, nutrient-rich staples. Planning your meals, shopping with a list, and reducing food waste are some of the best ways to stretch your budget while still eating well and supporting your gut health.





**Pictured at Pulse:** National Medical Sales Conference 2025, for the presentation of the Dr B.D. Place Medal, supported by the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) is Caitriona Walsh, on behalf of IPHA, presenting the medal to Aoife Loftus, Théa Pharma Ireland. This award was presented to Aoife as the highest scoring candidate in the MRII Examination 2025.



**Pictured at a recent lunch meeting where 'East met West', were MRII retired members:**

**Front row left to right:**

Mick Dunne, Peter McGarry, Robin Ward, Roger Towey, Peter Whitty, Michael O'Brien, Peter Sheedy

**Back row left to right:**

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- #1 Unparalleled networking opportunities allowing members to connect with other healthcare sales professionals
- #2 Educational events (online and in-person) allow members to keep up to date with topical subjects and news of interest for your continued education.
- #3 Active participation: will enhance your CV and you, both professionally and personally.
- #4 Some MRII members are job seekers and have secured jobs through active MRII involvement.
- #5 Use of the initials MMRII to denote full MRII membership.
- #6 Affiliate membership option for those whose career development plan does not include the MRII Examination.
- #7 Student members can apply for the MRII examination giving you access to the MRII syllabus and providing you with an opportunity to gain an industry recognised qualification.
- #8 Opportunity to sit on Council to allow you to shape the events, activities and future of your professional organisation.
- #9 Increase your network and skills with our Ambassador and Volunteer programmes.
- #10 Pulse, the National Medical Sales Conference, as an MRII member you are in a unique position to attend with like-minded professionals.

A big thank you to the companies and products that supported our conference packs at Pulse 2025: National Medical Sales Conference. Your contribution added real value for our delegates and helped make the day a success.



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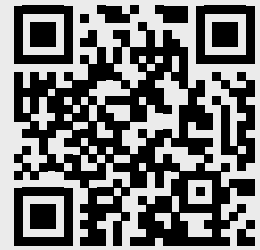
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