

My Comrade Plus (MC+) is a pilot cluster Randomized Controlled Trial (cRCT), involving General Practitioners and Practice Based Pharmacists from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, in exploring a new approach to reviewing medication for patients with more than one long-term medical condition. Fundamental to the study is the Patient Public Involvement (PPI) group who meet regularly to ensure public and patient perspectives are reflected in the research activities and documentation.

The MC+ cross-border four-member panel consist of: Dr Morris Brown, Katie Baxter, Nan McCarron and John McCosker. The members have personal and/or indirect exposure or experience of living with multiple long-term health conditions, being prescribed multiple medications and using primary healthcare services.

The group recently entered the inaugural National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway) PPI Excellence in Research Awards. The awards were set up to acknowledge and reward PPI contributors and researchers who are working together to ensure public and patients perspectives are reflected throughout all phases of the research process.

The MC+ group submitted a recorded and written application about different aspects of their involvement in the MC+ as a PPI member. Their submission included:

- personal insights on living with multimorbidity
- reasons for volunteering with the MC+ study
- personal experience as a member and partaking in MC+ PPI activities.

The team were joint winners of the PPI Research in Excellence category based on the group's achievements in ensuring the voice and perspectives of people living with multi-morbidities are heard and reflected in the development and dissemination of the MC+ study. Their award included a financial contribution towards furthering PPI engagement in research.

Winner of this award and MC+ PPI member, Nan McCarron said:

"It felt good to have my voice heard as a panel member for the MyComrade+ research project. I have been very close to this subject for the last 23 years. Hopefully, I've/we've played a role in making a positive and constructive difference in how patients and their medications will be managed in the future, not just for our own communities but for the whole of the UK and Republic of Ireland. Hopefully this successful research will spread globally when the evident benefits are observed."

Winner of this award and MC+ PPI member, Dr Morris Brown stated:

"I am delighted to receive the PPI Excellence in Research Award and thank all those involved in this study. At the onset of the request to become involved in the My Comrade + partnership I was somewhat apprehensive as I was unsure, having been retired for almost 15 years, that I could make a useful contribution to the study. Jointly winning the PPI Award I see as recognition that I and the team have made a useful contribution to the research and I feel very proud to receive this recognition. I have also learnt the importance of PPI input into research for the improvement of health outcomes."

Collette Kirwan, Project Manager of MC+ study added:

"The MyComrade + Research Team were delighted that our excellent and dedicated PPI group received this 'PPI Excellence in Research' Award. Well deserved. We wish to say a sincere thank-you to all involved in this CHITIN Study. In particular, thank-you to the PPI team, to the GP practices, their staff & all the patients for their generous time and for the

enthusiasm shown, particularly in such trying times. And we wish to thank the CHITIN team for all their constant support and guidance in conducting the study - thank-you.”

Dr Rhonda Campbell, CHITIN Programme Manager said:

“CHITIN strives to promote enhanced opportunity of involvement in HSC research whether that be participation in or in the delivery of HSC research. The much deserved Excellence in Research Award given to the PPI contributors on the MC+ research team serves as a reminder of how meaningful PPI is in all aspects of the research process and how PPI enhances the quality of the HSC research for the benefit of us all.”

MC+ is one of 11 trials who have received INTERREG VA funding under the CHITIN Project. CHITIN is led by the Public Health Agency in partnership with the Health Research Board. CHITIN’s overall aim is to help prevent illness and improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland through cross-border research collaborations.

CHITIN has received €10.601,181.20 million funding from the European Union’s INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) with match funding from the Departments of Health in NI and ROI.

For more information on the HSC R&D Division’s PPI Strategy please visit:

https://research.hscni.net/sites/default/files/strategy_for_PPI_Report_RD_2014.pdf

Pic: Members of the NUIG PPI Panel

