

Teen mum text and Twitter project amongst winners at National Health Literacy Awards

Healthcare professionals nationwide acknowledged for improving patient communication

Dublin, Monday, 19th April 2010: Una O'Brien, a staff midwife from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, was amongst the winners at today's **Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards** for her pioneering project, 'Txt and Twitter ur Teenage Mums. B in Touch.' At a ceremony in Dublin, Una was awarded for the programme she developed after noticing that many teenage mothers were not attending antenatal classes and were unprepared for the birth of their child. She won first place in the category, 'Best Project in the Community or in a Social Setting' for her efforts to provide pregnant teens with as much information as possible and to encourage them to attend antenatal classes using text messages and Twitter. Six other organisations were also recognised for their efforts to communicate more clearly and for making information more accessible to the public.



Dublin, Monday, 19th April: Pictured celebrating her win at the **Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards** is Una O'Brien alongside **Jennifer Lynch**, Projects Coordinator, National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and **Ciara O'Rourke**, Director External Affairs, MSD. At the awards, seven organisations were recognised for their efforts to communicate more clearly with the public. Una O'Brien, staff midwife, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, scooped an award for, 'Txt and Twitter ur Teenage Mums. B in Touch' which encourages pregnant teens to attend antenatal classes using texts and Twitter and provides clear and concise information for teenagers during the classes. For more information visit www.healthliteracy.ie

"Una's project is innovative and exemplifies the ethos of health literacy," said Dr Gerardine Doyle, UCD Business Schools and chairperson of the Crystal Clear Awards judging panel. "The judges were impressed by her efforts to communicate with teenagers in a language that makes sense to them, even 'translating' her messages into 'teenage texting language.' The extent of her engagement with teen mothers and her groundbreaking use of new technologies have had a measurable impact, increasing attendance at her antenatal classes by 90% in one year. The judges felt her project was inspirational and we honour her for using clear health communication to make a real difference in people's lives."

Speaking about her win, Una O'Brien said, "I am delighted to have won a Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy award. It is an honour to be recognised for my work which has improved communication with teenage mothers and fathers. I look forward to sharing my experience with

other units which I hope will ultimately improve other services for teenagers nationwide."

The seven winning initiatives were selected from over 120 entries which had to demonstrate how they addressed the issue of health literacy, which is a person's ability to understand and use basic health information, whether they receive it in writing, in person or over the phone. Health literacy also involves a person having the knowledge to understand their options and make informed decisions about their own health.



Dublin, Monday, 19th April: Pictured from left is **Una O'Brien**, a staff midwife from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda; **Jimmy Fearon**, CEO, DEBRA Ireland; and **Roisin Ryder**, Coordinator, Fatima and Dolphin Community Health Project celebrating their win at the **Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards** where seven organisations were recognised for their efforts to communicate more clearly with the public. Una O'Brien, staff midwife, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, scooped an award for, 'Txt and Twitter ur Teenage Mums. B in Touch' which encourages pregnant teens to attend antenatal classes using texts and Twitter and provides clear and concise information for teenagers during the classes. For more information visit www.healthliteracy.ie

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Ms Ciara O'Rourke, judge and External Affairs Director, MSD, said, "As the health literacy demands being placed on patients continues to rise, it is heartening to see so many initiatives putting patients needs first. All the finalists and winners recognised here today demonstrate best practice; having improved the public's understanding of their illnesses, empowering them to take more responsibility and make more informed decisions about managing their own health.

Commenting on the awards, Inez Bailey, Director of the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), said, "We can all relate to the increasing demands being put on our literacy skills when dealing with the array of information we come across in work and everyday life. It is important to understand that literacy difficulties are not confined to a particular topic. Anyone of us can have difficulties understanding information related to topics such as health, finance or technology and the Crystal Clear awards help raise

awareness of the importance of communicating health information more clearly."

Other award winners included: DEBRA Ireland for their entry, 'My Diary,' a tool to provide information to healthcare professionals and families who may never have heard of the rare skin condition Epidermolysis Bullosa; and the Irish Osteoporosis Society, for their project, 'Osteoporosis: the Silent Disease DVD and accompanying Educational Pack.' The Fatima & Dolphin Health Projects were recognised for their initiative which tackles the high rates of ill-health within Fatima Mansions and Dolphin House estates and improves the holistic wellbeing of the community.

Health literacy is increasingly recognised as an important issue in Ireland and across Europe. Research shows that many people in Ireland struggle to read and understand health-related information such as directions on medicine packs, medical advice, consent forms and health information leaflets. However, over the past three years, the Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards has received over 360 entries from receptionists in GP surgeries, nurses, hospital catering managers, pharmacists, doctors and patient advocates, all making efforts to make health communication clearer.

The judging panel for the awards is represented by individuals from NALA, MSD, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Irish Practice Nurses Association (IPNA), UCD, a General Practice and the Adelaide Hospital Society.

Further information on health literacy and the Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards can be found at www.healthliteracy.ie.

ENDS

Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards 2010

Winners and Finalists

Category A – Best Project in General Practice

Finalists

- Arthritis Ireland, 'Let's Talk Arthritis'
- Irishtown and Ringsend Primary Care Team, Health Service Executive, 'Irishtown Primary Care Centre Brochure'

Winner

- Jimmy Fearon, DEBRA Ireland, 'My Diary'/ EB passport'
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Category B- Best Project in a Hospital

Finalist

- Day Theatre Staff, Mid Western Regional Hospital, 'Development of a pre-operative booklet for children attending Day Surgery'

Winners

- Premi Naidoo and Pauline Logan, Speech and Language Therapy Department, Peamount Hospital, 'Facilitating Mealtime Choices'
 - Una O'Brien, Staff Midwife, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, 'Txt and Twitter ur Teenage Mums. B in Touch.'
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Category C- Best project in the Community or in a Social Setting

Finalists

- Trine Kelly and Project Team, Residential Child Care Service, HSE Dublin North East, 'Funky Food Cookery Book'
- Irish Osteoporosis Society, 'Osteoporosis: the Silent Disease DVD and accompanying Educational Pack'
- Gemma Quinn and C-diff and Families, Infection Prevention & Control Manager, PCCC HSE West Co. Clare 'Hygiene & Infection: Control Advice in the Home'

Winners

- Christine Murphy-Whyte, Chairperson, Europa Donna Ireland, '9 things you should know about breast cancer'
 - Fatima & Dolphin Community Health Projects, 'Fatima and Dolphin Community Health Projects'
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Category D- Best Health Promotion Project

Finalist

- The Screening Promotion Team, National Cancer Screening Service, 'Promoting Awareness of both the BreastCheck and CervicalCheck Programmes'

Winner

- Sarah Mumford and Maeve McNamara, Senior Community Dietician, Health Service Executive, 'Milk it, much Ado about nothing'
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Category E- Best Health Communication through Journalism

Finalists

- Joy Orpen, Journalist, Sunday Independent, 'Racing for life'
- Samantha Libreri, Journalist, RTE News, "Report focusing on cervical cancer"

Winner

- Operation Transformation Team, RTE, 'Operation Transformation website'
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Notes to Editor

Definition of health literacy

Health literacy involves a person being able to understand basic health information whether they receive it in writing, in person or over the phone. It also involves a person having the knowledge to understand their options and make informed decisions about their own health.

People working in the healthcare sector play an important part in improving health literacy by communicating more clearly and making information and services more accessible to patients.

According to the International Adult Literacy Survey, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1997, over 50% of Irish adults are affected in some way by literacy difficulties.

About MSD

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About the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is an independent member-based organisation committed to making sure people with literacy and numeracy difficulties can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA was established in 1980 and has campaigned since then for the recognition of, and response to, the adult literacy issue in Ireland. It is concerned with developing policy, advocacy, research and offering advisory services in adult literacy work in Ireland. For further information visit www.nala.ie