

Campaigns to promote suicide prevention, early detection of stroke and after school physical activity amongst winners at National Health Literacy Awards

Fourth annual Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards acknowledge leaders promoting clearer communications in healthcare environments

(EMBARGO Dublin, Monday, 9th May 2011 @ 2.30pm): Topical health areas of stroke, suicide, heart health, physical activity and ear care prevailed as category winners at the 2011 annual Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards ceremony in Dublin today, which was attended by Dr. James Reilly, Minister for Health and Children.

Selected from over 100 entries by a high profile judging panel the winning entries were;

- **The Irish Heart Foundation's F.A.S.T stroke awareness campaign** - The Irish Heart Foundation used the acronym F.A.S.T (Face, Arms, Speech and Time to call 999) to help people remember the main warning signs of stroke and act by calling the emergency services. This campaign sought to tackle the frightening lack of awareness around Ireland's third biggest killer.
- **The Irish Examiner's 'Let's Talk Suicide' campaign** - The Irish Examiner sought to put a human face on the national crisis that suicide now represents in their 'Let's Talk Suicide' campaign. The campaign booklet focused on interviews with people affected by suicide giving them an opportunity to tell their stories and share their pain, frustration and hope with input from key support groups and associations involved in suicide prevention and suicide advice, support and information.
- **The HSE Dublin North East's 'Be Active After School Activity Programme'** - This initiative comprises a 30 week structured activity programme which introduces parents and children aged 7-8 years to a variety of activities to sustain positive physical activity habits as children grow up. There are currently 1,200 children participating in the programme with 300 parent leaders and 130 teacher leaders volunteering their time to facilitate the sessions.
- **The HSE South Cardiac Rehabilitation Working Group's 'Take Heart' programme** - This programme comprises a booklet titled 'Take Heart' which is used by patients before, during and after they have a heart operation. The booklet helps patients understand their diagnosis and make appropriate choices regarding their lifestyle following heart surgery.
- **The Health Centre, Athenry, Galway's ear care and ear wax information programme** - This programme comprises an information leaflet about ear care which is one of the reasons why people visit a GP or a practice nurse. Using Plain English, the leaflet provides information in an easy to understand and engaging way and following distribution of the leaflet, the practice carried out an audit which showed a reduction in the number of patients coming back for repeat ear related appointments.

Winners were chosen in their respective categories because of the clear and accessible way in which they communicated important health messages. The entries were evaluated for 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 health.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Inez Bailey, Director of NALA said 'Around 1 in 4 adults in Ireland will have difficulty fully understanding information presented to them in health care settings. Health literacy includes the ability to understand instructions on medication packs and bottles, appointment slips, medical education materials, doctor's directions and consent forms, and the ability to negotiate complex health care systems. It requires a complex group of reading, listening, analytical, and decision-making skills, and the ability to apply these skills to health situations. As part of NALA's work to advance health literacy, the MSD Crystal Clear awards play a pivotal role in highlighting the good practice amongst health practitioners in this area.'

Ms Ciara O'Rourke, External Affairs Director, MSD and member of the judging panel said, 'Research shows that many people struggle to read, understand and make important decisions in a healthcare environment. Since the Crystal Clear Health Literacy Awards were first launched in 2008, we have received over 450 entries from receptionists in GP surgeries, nurses, hospital catering managers, pharmacists, doctors and patient advocates who are all intent on making health communications clearer to those reading them and trying to understand them. All of these communications initiatives are endeavouring to put the patient first and enabling them to make more informed decisions about their health.'

Also speaking at the awards ceremony Dr Gerardine Doyle from UCD Business School and Chairperson of the Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards Judging Panel said 'I am delighted to see the new entries each year highlight the inspiring efforts being made by health professionals from all parts of the service to improve the health literacy of their patient group. We all play an important part in improving health literacy by communicating more clearly and making information and services more accessible to the general public. The judges were impressed by the novel approach all of those shortlisted took to incorporate health literacy into their daily work. Even the smallest changes can make the biggest difference and we hope that this good work will continue to develop amongst all those working and communicating in the healthcare sector. For the future we need to develop national goals and strategies that will improve health literacy in the Irish population.'

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

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Notes to the editor

About the 2011 Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards Judging Panel

All 100 entries to the 2011 Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards were assessed by a judging panel which comprised of representation from NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency), UCD Business Schools, HIQA (Health Information and Quality Authority), IPNA (Irish Practice Nurses Association), the HSE, UCC, the Adelaide Hospital Society, the Irish Medical Times, General Practice and MSD.

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

About MSD

Today's MSD is a global healthcare leader working to help the world be well. MSD is known as Merck in the United States and Canada and MSD elsewhere. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and consumer care and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to healthcare through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. For more information, visit www.msd.ie.

MSD in Ireland

MSD employs 2,300 people directly in Ireland and provides an additional 9,000 indirect jobs through its operations at sites throughout Ireland.

In the last four decades the company has invested over €2.2bn in Ireland. MSD is one of Ireland's leading exporters and contributes significantly towards making the pharmaceutical industry the country's leading export sector. MSD is a member of Guaranteed Irish and manufacturers or packages many of its leading products for the world market in Ireland.