

## **Just 7% of general population recognise lung cancer as single biggest cancer killer of women in Ireland**

- *New research reveals significant knowledge gap on true impact of Lung Cancer in Ireland*

**Dublin, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017:** New research<sup>[i]</sup> has revealed that there remains a significant knowledge gap amongst the general population on the current and future prevalence and impact of lung cancer in Ireland. The research initiated and funded by MSD and the Marie Keating Foundation, shows that, despite lung cancer being the single biggest cancer killer of women in Ireland<sup>[ii]</sup>, only 7% of the population identified it as such.

Over half of those questioned (57%) believing that breast cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths in Ireland and nearly a quarter (24%) identifying cervical cancer. This knowledge gap is particularly acute amongst young people with 70% of 18 to 24 year olds believing that breast cancer kills more women in Ireland than lung cancer, at 5%.

Additionally, despite the National Cancer Registry predicting that lung cancer rates in women will increase by as much as 136% by 2040<sup>[iii]</sup>, over 40%<sup>[iv]</sup> of those surveyed stated that they expect lung cancer rates to decrease over the next 25 years, with a further 20% believing that lung cancer rates would stay the same.

The new research was presented at an event held in Dublin, to mark Lung Cancer Awareness Month, and discuss health and social inequalities in Irish lung cancer treatment. The event, *Lung Cancer: Awareness, Stigma, Inequality*, was hosted by MSD Ireland in association with the Marie Keating Foundation.

Examining the topic of health inequality specifically, the general public correctly identified that rates of lung cancer are 60% higher in socially deprived areas in Ireland versus more affluent areas; and that a worrying 10% of the population believe the rates of lung cancer to be 80% higher.<sup>[v]</sup>

The event heard from a number of leading healthcare experts including Professor John Crown from St Vincent's University Hospital, Liz Yeates, CEO of the Marie Keating Foundation, Dr. Ross Morgan of the Irish Thoracic Society, and Dr Anne-Marie Baird of Lung Cancer Europe.

According to Liz Yeates, CEO of the Marie Keating Foundation, "The National Cancer Strategy, published earlier this year, sets out a clear objective in terms of improving cancer incidence and survival rates in Ireland, with a specific call out to reduce inequalities in five-year survival rates for lung cancer by 2026. If we are to meet these targets, all stakeholders need to work together to ensure early and consistent diagnosis and treatment for lung cancer patients in Ireland. Today we are launching a significant campaign asking people to "Listen to Your Lungs" and be aware of the crucial early signs of lung cancer. We want to ensure people know that they should go to their GP if they have a persistent cough for more than three weeks, particularly if this is combined with other symptoms such as breathlessness, fatigue or on-going chest infections."

Speaking at the event, Dr Anne-Marie Baird of Lung Cancer Europe said, "Increasing lung cancer awareness and tackling the stigma associated with the disease are key to improving outcomes for patients. Furthermore, we have a responsibility to ensure that all patients have equal access to treatment, irrespective of their location or socio-economic status.

The research was initiated and funded by MSD and conducted from 20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017 by Empathy Research with a nationally representative sample of 1,013 adults aged 18 and over.

## **ENDS**

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<sup>[ii]</sup> National Cancer Research Institute, <https://www.ncri.ie/publications/cancer-trends-and-projections/cancer-projections-ireland-2015-%E2%80%93-2040>

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<sup>[iv]</sup> According to the survey carried out by research company Empathy, 41% of Irish adults expect lung cancer in women to have decreased by 35% by the time we reach 2040, with just over a quarter (27%) thinking they will remain the same. There are almost 3 in 10 (29%) who think the rates will have increased by 35%, with just 3% believing rates will have increased by 135%.

<sup>[v]</sup> According to the survey carried out by research company Empathy, 78% of Irish adults believe that lung cancer rates are higher in socially deprived areas than in more affluent areas. A third of Irish adults (33%) think they are 60% higher; indeed according to “Cancer inequalities in Ireland by deprivation, urban/rural status and age: a National Cancer Registry report” which found that lung cancer rates were 60% higher in more deprived compared with the least deprived groups. [https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/cancer-inequality-report-2016\\_0.pdf](https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/cancer-inequality-report-2016_0.pdf)