



## First study of its kind reveals Irish public's aspirations for the future of healthcare in Ireland

- Ipsos MRBI poll, commissioned by MSD, shows that almost as many Irish people are optimistic as pessimistic about Irish healthcare services in the future (39% compared with 40%)
- 80% would be willing to visit their local pharmacist rather than a GP, if appropriate
- 84% agree that their health records should be accessible electronically by healthcare professionals
- 85% believe 'respect' is very important when using healthcare services

**Dublin, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016:** Almost as many people are optimistic as pessimistic about the future of healthcare in Ireland, according to a new study from Ipsos MRBI commissioned by MSD. The report reveals that among the general public's main healthcare asks in the future are speed of service and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Entitled '*My Healthcare, My Future,*' the research asks members of the general public - current and future Irish patients - about their vision of healthcare provision in Ireland, looking at sentiment towards healthcare as well as offering solutions to some of the key challenges facing the healthcare service. The research comprised of 1,000 nationally representative telephone interviews, a series of focus groups, and interviews with healthcare professionals and industry experts.

The report found that the public tends to compare its experience as a 'consumer' of healthcare to being a consumer of other services and industries. There was also a consensus amongst respondents regarding patients' needs, which include an accessible and affordable healthcare system for all, clear communication about scheduling and treatments, and early access to new medicines and treatments.

Launching the report, **Minister for Health, Simon Harris T.D., said:** "I want to thank MSD for commissioning this important study - it's a valuable piece of research that will complement the work carried out in my own Department and elsewhere. The value of the research is that it allows people using our health services to tell us what they think in their own words and in terms of their own experiences, perceptions and hopes.

I am determined to ensure that the patient experience is listened to, and I will be launching several initiatives aimed at delivering better patient engagement and empowerment, including eHealth innovations that have the potential to radically change the way health services are delivered. I will also announce a National Patient Experience Survey, to be undertaken by my Department, the HSE and HIQA in 2017 and I look forward to making sure that a patient centred health service means just that."

**Managing Director for Human Health at MSD Ireland, Ger Brennan, commented:** "This report is a comprehensive study of the Irish public's expectations, hopes and needs in relation to healthcare. Our objective was to create a platform for industry, government, the health sector and all interested parties to have an open debate, focusing on the opportunities available to provide a healthcare system that works better for all. It is evident from the research that the public is keen to add its voice to this discussion. We hope that the outputs of this report contribute to an inclusive debate and help us, both industry and government alike, to devise relevant solutions for patients."

Key findings emerging from the research include:

### **Pharmacists are a trusted (and frequently visited) resource**

- While 86% of the public have confidence in their GP, pharmacists are also emerging as a key point of healthcare interaction. Not only are pharmacists the most frequented healthcare group, at an average of nine visits a year, they also have an 82% confidence rating with the general public. 80% were willing to visit their local pharmacist rather than a GP for minor medical concerns and advice, if appropriate.
- In general, there's increasing openness amongst Irish people to use community-based services such as GPs and pharmacists rather than visiting a hospital (93%), if appropriate to their medical needs.

### **Patients want to be treated with respect and dignity**

- The public want to be treated with appropriate reassurance, empathy, privacy and respect in a way that will enhance their experience; 85% view "respect" as very important when using healthcare services.
- Many spoke highly about their interaction with healthcare professionals, who they acknowledge go out of their way to deliver quality healthcare in often challenging environments. Some believe that simple improvements, such as clear information on waiting times when in the emergency department (ED), or the ability to check appointments and ED lead times online, could go a long way towards delivering a more positive user experience.
- Two in three people (67%) believe it is very important that the healthcare services of the future should have respect for their time and their other commitments and responsibilities
- 71% of those surveyed believe that it's very important that the doctor or nurse allows them the time to discuss their concerns during consultations.

### **Technology is expected to play a pivotal role in the future**

- Four in five people (80%) believe it is very important that technology will be used, where possible, to make healthcare better in the future, with respondents in the 55+ age cohort placing greater importance on this than their younger counterparts.
- 84% of are happy for their health records to be accessed electronically by healthcare professionals while 74% believe that the public should be allowed to access their own medical information online.

### **Access highlighted as key priority**

- Almost nine in ten (89%) believe that being able to access healthcare services in a timely manner in the future is very important. Some commented that this not only means being seen without undue delay but also, ideally, accessing that service within a reasonable proximity of one's home.
- The research also raises the importance of fair access to medicines at a fair price. Looking to the future, over three in four (78%) believe it is very important that the Government and HSE invest in making new medicines available to Irish people.
- Although less is known about clinical trials, almost two in three (64%) believe it is very important that Irish patients can get access to new treatments early through clinical trials.

### **Call for open and clear communication – no jargon**

- Clear communication is recognised within the research as essential for patients to fully understand and manage their conditions. 86% of respondents say it is very important that their illness or condition will be clearly explained to them in language they understand.
- The report found that Irish people look to their healthcare professional for empathy and guidance and say they are willing to be involved in decision-making around any treatment they require (85%), with 92% saying they are willing to ask questions if they don't understand what a medical professional tells them.

Commenting on the findings, Tarik Laher, Ipsos MRBI said: “This study allows the voice of the Irish public, which can be marginalised, to come to the fore in order to help shape the delivery of their healthcare in the future. Our research participants across the country spoke passionately about their experiences, hopes and expectations for their future healthcare. As a nation we recognise that while there is great work being done in the healthcare sector by great people, there are opportunities to enhance services in the future to deliver a more favourable patient experience. Ipsos MRBI is delighted to have been involved in this novel study and hope it provides an insight into the hopes, expectations and wishes of the Irish public from their healthcare service.”

The report was launched by Minister Simon Harris at a business breakfast this morning, followed by a panel discussion involving key experts from across Irish healthcare. Moderated by GP and TV Presenter Dr. Ciara Kelly, the panel included *Kathy Maher*, Past President, Irish Pharmacy Union; *Tony O’Brien*, Director General of the HSE; *Kate O’Flaherty*, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Department of Health and *Brian O’Mahony*, CEO, Irish Haemophilia Society.

## ENDS

### For further information please contact:

Darina Sexton  
MSD  
Phone: 353 (0) 87 775 3000

Edel Fitzgerald (0876068263) and Karina Dooley  
(0862012856)  
ReputationInc  
Phone: 01 412 0500

### Research Methodology

Ipsos MRBI, commissioned by MSD Ireland, conducted a programme of research, beginning in late 2015 and running through the first half of 2016. The research consisted of a series of focus group discussions with the general public, a telephone survey of 1,000 members of the general public, and in-depth interviews with healthcare professionals and industry experts.

This report combines the results of all stages, focusing predominantly on the views of the general public from both the telephone survey and focus groups, supplemented where appropriate with contributions from healthcare professionals and industry experts.

### About MSD

MSD, known as Merck in the United States and Canada, has operations in more than 140 countries. MSD employs approximately 2,000 people across its sites in Ireland, which encompass manufacturing, R&D, commercial and marketing facilities in addition to global support services.

As a global leader in healthcare, MSD is dedicated to helping the world be well through a wide range of innovative health solutions. This includes the development, production and distribution of prescription medicines, vaccines and biologic therapies as well as animal health products. We also drive and support the on-going development of patient support initiatives.

MSD’s core values are driven by the desire to improve life, achieve scientific excellence, operate with the highest standards of integrity, expand access to our products, and employ a diverse workforce that values collaboration.

Many of the most widely used MSD medicines are developed by our teams in Ireland, with over 60% of MSD’s global top 20 products now manufactured here in Ireland. We have invested hugely in the Irish market and our Irish sites are highly regarded, and renowned, by our colleagues across the globe.