



Media Release
MSD / National Adult Literacy Agency

Irish people calling for healthcare professionals to use less medical jargon

Ireland's first health literacy quality mark, Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme, launched by MSD and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

- 39% of Irish people calling for less medical jargon from their healthcare professionals
- 17% of people surveyed said they had taken the wrong amount of medication on at least one occasion

Thursday, 26th March 2015: Two in five (39%) Irish people are calling for doctors, nurses and pharmacists to use more understandable language and less medical jargon according to a new health literacy survey published today. The results were revealed to coincide with the launch of the Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme developed by MSD and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).

The programme has been developed to recognise the critical role pharmacies and general practices play in helping patients understand their health issues and the steps they need to take to improve their health. A Crystal Clear Mark will be awarded to pharmacies and general practices where there is evidence of and commitment to providing a health literacy friendly service to patients. This requires taking account of the literacy and numeracy needs of patients and looking for ways to consistently communicate clearly.

Launching the programme, Minister with responsibility for Primary Care Kathleen Lynch, said, "One in three people in Ireland today are living with a chronic condition that requires ongoing self-management with the support of a healthcare professional. Clear

communication and understanding is absolutely vital for anyone who needs to make decisions about their own health or those of a loved one. This new Crystal Clear mark recognises the important role primary care and community pharmacy plays in bridging the communication gap between patients and healthcare professionals and it is a welcome step towards improving overall health literacy levels in Ireland - a key component of the Healthy Ireland Framework.”

Inez Bailey, Director, NALA commented, “We are delighted that pharmacists and general practitioners want to improve their services to become more literacy friendly. This will ensure that important health information is better communicated and understood between health practitioners and their patients. This is an investment in better health outcomes for all people in Ireland.”

Brian Longstreet, Managing Director of MSD Human Health added, “The research shows that patients are calling for healthcare professionals to speak to them in a more understandable manner and the feedback we have had from pharmacies and general practices supports this finding. That’s why we are delighted to work with NALA to support the establishment of the quality mark which recognises those pharmacies and general practices which are actively taking steps to ensure that their facilities are planned in a way that makes it easy for patients to access information and their staff are trained to communicate clearly. Ensuring patients are better informed about their own health is key to delivering good health outcomes and as such MSD is delighted to be involved in this programme.”

Other interesting findings revealed in the 2015 Health Literacy Survey include:

- 39% of patients called on healthcare professionals to use less medical jargon in order communicate more clearly. This was followed by speaking less formally (22%) and taking more time to explain things (18%)
- This compares to research undertaken by MSD in 2007 where patients identified taking more time to explain (37%) and using more understandable language (33%) as the main changes healthcare professionals could make to communicate more clearly
- People aged 15 - 34 years were least likely to ask a doctor, nurse or pharmacist to explain things they don’t understand

- Embarrassment was ranked as the main reason for not seeking more information from a healthcare professional (24%) - this was marginally higher amongst 15 - 34 year olds in particular
- Nearly half (49%) of people aged 15 - 34 years said their first port of call when looking to know more about a condition they had been diagnosed with would be to look it up online

Also in attendance at the launch was renowned global health literacy expert Dr Michael Wolf, Professor of Medicine and Learning Sciences at Northwestern University in Illinois, who delivered the keynote address.

Pharmacies and general practices who wish to participate in the Crystal Clear Programme simply need to log on to www.nala.ie/crystalclear to complete the online audit which will identify what they are already doing to support the literacy and numeracy needs of their patients and what they could do better. Those who are successful in completing this audit can then apply for the Crystal Clear Mark.

The Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme is a joint initiative between MSD and NALA and is supported by the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU).

-ENDS-

For further information please contact:

Pia Ward
ReputationInc
Tel: 0 1 412 0515
Mob: 087 932 7702

Notes to Editors

What is Health Literacy?

Health literacy and numeracy is based on the simple concept of a health provider such as a doctor, nurse or pharmacist communicating clearly and the patient understanding that information so that they can make appropriate health decisions.

About the Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme

The Crystal Clear Pharmacy and General Practice Programme involves pharmacies and general practices completing an online audit at www.nala.ie/crystalclear to determine their policies and procedures; how they communicate; staff awareness; and how they evaluate and continually improve their service. Pharmacies and general practices who pass the audit get the Crystal Clear Mark and those who do not, will be offered guidance and support by NALA to achieve it.

About the Research

The health literacy research was carried out by Ipsos MRBI in February 2015 among a sample of 1,000 adults aged 15+. To ensure the sample was representative at a national level, weighting was applied across age, gender, social class, and region.

About MSD

MSD, known as Merck in the United States and Canada, has operations in more than 140 countries. In Ireland, MSD employs over 2,000 people across its five sites in Dublin, Carlow, Cork, Tipperary and Wicklow. Its extensive Irish operations encompass manufacturing, commercial and marketing facilities.

MSD is a leader in healthcare, 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.

MSD's commitment to research and to increasing access to healthcare across the world is demonstrated by clearly focused policies, far-reaching programmes and life-enhancing partnerships.

About NALA

The National Adult Literacy Agency is an independent charity 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 has been involved in promoting health literacy for over a decade. In 2012 NALA published the present state of health literacy in Ireland document and it goes into the area in more detail at: <http://bit.ly/17qUFz>