



Communicating Research: A guide

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Introduction

Communicating research findings to audiences outside the academic community, whether in government bodies and departments, business, the community and voluntary sector, media or general public, has become a vital part of researcher's work. Engaging with the media allows a researcher to communicate research findings more widely to opinion leaders, the public and also the wider academic community. Engaging with the media is an effective way of:

- Communicating research to key audiences
- Raising your profile as a researcher
- Stimulating and contributing to public debate

CARDI has designed this guide to provide some practical guidelines on engaging with the media and increasing the reach and impact of your research. The guide provides information that is also of value when communicating your research to non-academic audiences in general. It will provide information on:

- What we talk about when we talk about ageing
- Understanding the media
- What makes the news
- Working well with journalists
- Writing press releases
- Giving interviews
- Using social media

In researching attitudes to older people in the Economist, we found that nearly two thirds of the relevant articles portrayed them in a negative light, effectively as a burden to society. The subject matter in three quarters of the articles involved pensions, demography, health care, and politics; and the theme of apocalyptic demography was widespread. Older people were often portrayed as frail non-contributors to society. The alarmist words "time bomb" were commonly used in relation to demography and pensions ... Even with latitude for its tradition of mordant humour, its articles are rife with ageist references, including referring to older people in derogatory terms such as wrinklies and crumblied¹ (Martin et al, 2009).

Certainly planning at a policy level is required to help meet the challenges associated with population ageing and a significant number of older people do experience frailty and poverty but these are by no means the only stories to tell about ageing and older people.

It is important that when researchers talk to the media about older people and ageing issues that they be careful in their use of language and cautious about adding to common myths or stereotypes as media discourse can have a powerful impact on shaping social realities, attitudes and behaviours towards ageing.

Words and phrases to name and reference older people need to be carefully chosen to avoid imposing an implied homogeneity on older people with reference to their health, capabilities, socio-economic status and related social needs² (Fealy et al, 2012).

In general the preferred noun in common use is 'older people' rather than elderly, old people, pensioners or senior citizen. Researchers should be careful when using adjectives such as frail or infirm when describing older people. In relation to dementia or other age-related conditions people with these conditions should be referred to as people 'living with' said condition rather than 'sufferer' 'patient' or 'victim'.

Above all researchers should seek to underline that older people are not a homogenous group but rather individuals with different life experiences, varying health, social and economic circumstances, and different experiences of ageing.

¹ Martin R, Williams C, O'Neill D, *Retrospective analysis of attitudes to ageing in the Economist: apocalyptic demography for opinion formers, BMJ (Clinical research ed.), 339, 2009.*

²

Fealy, G, McNamara, M, Treacy, PM. And Lyons, I (2012). *Constructing ageing and age identities: a case study of newspaper discourses. Ageing and Society, 32, pp 85-102.*

Some publications that may help researchers consider their choice of language when talking about ageing are listed below:

[The Media Takes On Ageing - International Longevity Center](#)

[Media Guidelines to Dementia Language - Alzheimer's Society of Ireland](#)

[Fact or fiction? Stereotypes of older Australians Research Report 2013 - Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

Designing a Communications Strategy

Increasingly, academics wish to and are required to communicate with the users of their research. The goal of this engagement may be to influence policy and practice, help the wider public understand their work or to tap into additional resources such as further funding which may help improve or further their research. The importance and value of communicating research is now well recognised. However, in order to be effective researchers should first consider a communications strategy which sets out their goals and identifies key audiences to be targeted as well as key messages and how communications should be carried out and finally assessed. At the heart of any communications strategy should be a carefully thought out media strategy that allows researchers to utilise available opportunities while also avoiding any potential pitfalls.

First Steps

A good media strategy starts with identifying key audiences for research findings and the best ways to reach them. It is also useful to identify a calendar of key dates that can be used to time stories or media contacts for example International Day for Older People, Positive Ageing Week or World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

It should consider how best to use the media i.e. to publicise findings or to influence current public debate on a topical issue. The strategy should allocate resources in terms of time, people and money that may be needed to explore media opportunities.

The media is the most effective channel through which researchers can reach wider audiences through print, television, radio and online outlets. They are conduits not just to the general public but also policymakers, commercial entities and the not-for-profit sector.

Media coverage can also help heighten your profile or the profile of your research. This can help attract more funding but also raise the profile of your research area or discipline.

Working with the media can be challenging for researchers and it is not a simple notice board for their stories. It requires researchers to learn new skills to shape and sharpen their key messages and identify human interest angles to their research in order to communicate

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in an environment which is constrained by time and space. It can also add positively to the research experience and help develop your career in new ways.

Target practice

Identifying key audiences

A key part of your strategy should be establishing your target audiences. From there you can decide what types of publications, channels and programmes you should prioritise. Central targets will be those with the greatest impact and readers or viewers. These will include national media including daily print newspapers, daily radio programmes, the main national news desks and news websites.

It is also worthwhile to think about other outlets for example if you have a strong regional focus or interest to your research, regional newspapers or radio might be an appropriate target. Regional radio is in particular an important medium to get your message out to a wider public.

Likewise you should consider niche publications for example the medical press. You might also consider that many large media outlets have websites on which they have more space to publish features or longform articles.

Within different media such as newspapers there are also a variety of forms in which information is published so you should think about whether you want to communicate your research through a straightforward news piece.

This will entail sharpening your messages and making them as concise as possible as there is limited space within a single story. Also you might consider whether you have appropriate images that might contribute to a piece.

Other types of content include opinion features which may entail drafting an opinion focussed piece or working with a journalist.

A feature piece may require more than a standard release so you should prepare other materials such as case studies or potential interviewees should the journalist accept your pitch.

It is important to note that while the media fulfils an important public service remit most are profit driven and audience driven so are not simply a free service for dissemination.

Media have their own priorities and wish to attract large audiences and advertising revenue. Economics aside, the media remains a very powerful, quick and effective way of communicating messages to a wide audience. Stories that receive media coverage shape public opinion and attitudes to issues and influence policy.

It is important once you have identified media targets that you become familiar with them. This means looking through a variety of media with a view to identifying the key ingredients that make up the stories in them.

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This also means identifying certain programmes, sections or journalists who regularly cover topics relevant to your research. This work helps you keep up to date with the news agenda and you will also begin to see how your research might fit into the news at any given time.

Making a media database

Once you have familiarised yourself with key media it is then a good idea to make up your own media contact list for future communications.

Your university press office or funders press office may be able to advise you in relation to creating this database. Otherwise depending on the scope and financials of your research you may wish to invest in a media directory (see for example <http://mediacontact.ie/>).

Databases such as LexisNexis and Newsbank, which should be available to you if you are working within a university, make it easier to create and maintain a personal database of articles and journalists relevant to your research. In addition, simply reading and taking note of articles and journalists will help you compile a list of key targets.

The media is a fast paced industry so your database should be regularly reviewed and checked as journalists move. It may be time consuming but it is a worthwhile exercise to identify targets, be familiar with their work and ensure you have their correct titles and contact information before you approach them.

At the core of your database will be a small number of journalists or outlets whose interests align with yours. For example, in the Republic of Ireland Dick Ahlstrom, Science Correspondent, *Irish Times* or health correspondents such as Paul Cullen, *Irish Times* or Susan Mitchell, *Sunday Business Post* and in Northern Ireland Anne Marie Connolly, *BBC*. It may be worth investing time to contact and try to build a relationship with these kinds of correspondents. This is not as difficult as it might appear as you may be able to encounter these people at conferences or events, or send an introductory email before a major conference with a summary of the research you are presenting. While these initial contacts may not result in a news or feature piece the conversation has begun. It is important that you are prepared in these contacts with sound information and arguments, and treat media professional with respect.

What makes 'the news'?

What makes the news is often a mystifying question to those outside the media. News is not an exact science and often what is considered newsworthy one day is not the next. Many factors play into whether a story will get coverage including wide ranging and changing national and international events, and 'the story' of the moment.

Certain things are identifiable as factors in getting coverage. As well as informing the media's job is also to entertain so that scandal and controversy are often guarantees of media space and airtime. This may seem daunting to a researcher who may wish to get coverage for a 'serious' research story. Having a strong human interest angle to your pitch is

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vital. We are all interested in how things may affect us and so by offering practical examples, case studies or instances where your research may apply to everyday life are all important in selling your story.

Although it is difficult to predict if your story will make the news there are certain ways of increasing the chances of it getting coverage:

1. What makes your story newsworthy - what's the hook? You can help identify this by considering your story's link to the current news agenda, the publication of your work in a well known journal or your presentation at a national or international conference.
2. Identify some sound bites. Sound bites may be concise examples that show the significance of the research. Have some examples of the relevance to everyday life of your research findings.
3. Make up a short list of digestible facts and figures.
4. Strip back your jargon.

Writing a press release

The press release is at the centre of any communications strategy. A release should summarise in accessible language the key findings of your research and include short quotes about the research and its relevance and or significance. A well written press release is often the easiest way to attract media attention to your story.

It is worth noting however that journalists receive a large volume of press releases each day so you should take time to craft a release that will stand out from the crowd. A good starting point is to think about why you are writing a press release. What is it exactly about the story that you wish to publicise? Think of the most relevant or interesting elements of your story e.g. key findings or a link to an event.

A press release should be written so as to make your research accessible to a wider public and should demonstrate its wider implications or relevance to every-day life.

Avoid jargon at all costs and remember that a release should be written in a way that is very different to a journal abstract.

You must make it clear, concise and to the point. Avoid getting into overly technical aspects of your research or complex methodology and focus instead on key messages and facts and figures that can be easily comprehended.

The release should reveal something new, unusual or interesting. Findings that reveal a new social trend or provide a new way of looking at a particular issue are much more likely to be of interest to the media.

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Findings should be communicated in concrete and specific ways for example instead of saying 'Older people in rural areas often suffer from social isolation' say '43% of people over 60 in rural areas reported feeling lonely'.

You should structure your release from top to bottom with the most important information leading the release and gradually working down to the background and context to the research. Your first paragraphs should capture succinctly the following elements of your story (see sample press releases in appendices):

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why is it important?

Regardless of your subject matter use plain English in your release and avoid jargon and acronyms. This does not mean 'dumbing down' your message. Rather there is a special skill in communicating complicated ideas in a way that is easily digested and therefore better understood.

Case studies often add to releases in that they can help add the human element to a story and/or show the practical implications of research. Case studies are simply stories that can be drawn from the research experience that help illustrate the findings for example stories from research participants on how a given research subject or the findings impact on their lives. A case study may also provide a simple outline of the context of a research subject. See the following websites for some examples:

<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/nidea/research/case-studies>

<http://www.allianceforaging.org/about-us/case-studies>

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/research-topics/health-wellbeing-research/ageing/>

A few well chosen direct quotations can help bring a story to life. Try using a variety of sources for quotes including research leader, 'the researched' (e.g. research participant) and/or a key stakeholder (e.g. a voluntary or community group - if your study is about cancer maybe the Cancer Society would consider commenting on the research findings).

A good press release should be no longer than 600-800 words and begin with an attention grabbing headline. At the end you can insert a section entitled Notes to Editors which may contain contact information for interviews and or short details on the publication of the research, context, funding and where more on the research can be obtained. Make sure that any additional information is easily accessible by the means of a website or a PDF that can be emailed.

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Issuing a press release

Use the media database that you have put together to send your press release to specialist correspondents or other journalists you have identified as relevant and to news desks/news editors of selected media outlets. When sending your press release by email pay careful attention to your wording in the subject line which may mean it is read or just deleted. Ensure you do not cc large groups of journalists as this may not only infringe data protection laws but may also cause offence as journalists do not like to feel they are being spammed by irrelevant material. Personalised emails are preferable to contact specific correspondents.

Be aware of current events when timing the release of your research. For example, be aware of trends that your research may link into or conversely if there are major events your release may be discarded. Creating a calendar of special days or weeks which might be relevant to your research may also be helpful e.g. if your research is about HIV maybe sending out findings in or around World AIDS Day, or if it is about elder abuse maybe time its release to coincide with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. This will increase the chances of coverage.

In general early morning is a good time to send releases or if you have an event sometimes issuing the release the previous afternoon may increase the chances of it being picked up. Be aware too of journalists deadlines e.g. a daily national newspapers will be 'put to bed' around 6-8pm the previous day and a morning breakfast show will normally be interested in picking up stories and pre-recorded interview the afternoon before. Likewise it is worthwhile getting to know the deadlines of specialist, regional weeklies and monthly publications so you can issue your releases in a timely manner.

Once issued it is important that journalists are able to contact you readily. It is essential that you provide a mobile number, email address and be prepared to respond to any queries. It may be useful in addition to your press release to draft a short key facts/figures summary sheet that details the main facts and have this on hand if contacted by journalists. Always ensure you have the facts about your research clear in advance and try brainstorming possible questions that may arise.

Responding to the news

Issuing a press release is just one way to get your message out to the media. Another element of your media strategy should be to follow the news stories of the day so that you keep on top of areas that are related to your research. This can help identify opportunities for you to respond or add to debate. For example, if there is a yearly global report on ageing issued maybe your research could fit in with this and you could provide a national perspective for local media.

Individual researchers can also raise their own public profile by engaging with current events and offering insights and potential solutions. Examples of this may be writing Letters to the Editor in response to a particular issue, making relevant information sheets or briefs available to the media or offering comment on issues. In this way you can build your profile as a source of commentary for media.

As your work in the media begins to bring results you may find that calls from the media become more frequent. This means you should be ready to commit time and resources as you deem fit to your work with the media. It is important to always respond to media calls in a timely manner and if you cannot perhaps nominate a secondary contact to answer questions.

A few key points to keep in mind when the media call:

- When you receive a call make sure you obtain the name, title and contact details for the journalist. Knowing the media outlet will mean you can make an informed judgement on how much time you are willing to put into any media query.
- Ask questions. Find out as much as possible about the journalist's query, what their angle is, who else they have talked to and ask them what their deadline is for information. Do not feel you have to answer everything off the bat. Take their contacts and tell them you will call them back with the information but ensure you do so in a timely manner.
- Assess the appropriateness of each media query. Is this something you want to speak on or do you know of a better qualified colleague who may be more suitable? Seek advice from colleagues or university press office. Assuming you are happy to go ahead collect your thoughts and run through what you might want to say and what you do not want to say.
- When talking about your research follow the same principles as when drafting a press release. In particular if you are doing a live interview draft up 3-4 key points you want to make.
- Try to prepare in advance for any potentially difficult questions and plan good answers.
- Be prepared to talk at short notice.
- You may find it useful before an interview to email the journalist a short summary of your research as this may help the journalist and you to know what to expect.

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Building your media profile

Just like making the news headline there is no exact recipe for success in raising your media profile but there are some ways in which you may capture the attention of the media:

- Sending out occasional, well written press releases about your research
- Writing occasional letters to the editor or submitting pieces for specialist magazines
- Speaking at events that journalists are likely to attend
- Volunteering as a spokesperson for your research area with your university press office or funder press office
- Maintaining a good online presence with insightful contributions regarding current affairs on social media especially Twitter and LinkedIn

As useful a tool as the media may be it is also important for you to assess the relevance of media queries to your research. For example, you may be contacted by journalists researching feature or documentary programmes; be mindful of the amount of time you put in assisting and what you may get in return for your time and effort. Other things to be mindful of are being drawn into a controversy. Being clear about your key messages and what you are willing or not willing to say is important in this context. This is also why it is important to vet media queries thoroughly and find out for example if you are being pitted against another guest.

Tips for doing media interviews

- Get a definite time and place for your interview. If in studio ensure you get there in plenty of time.
- Watch or listen to the programme you are appearing on to get an idea of tone. If it is a newspaper interview research the journalist online.
- Watch, listen or re-read your interviews to learn from practice.
- If doing TV you should accept offers of make-up and ensure you are dressed appropriately e.g. stripes look bad on television and stronger colours will make you appear better.
- On radio ensure you have a glass of water when interviewing.
- Do not assume the interviewer/audience knows a lot on the subject; be prepared to give clear background and context.
- Keep your answers concise and jargon free.
- If you are being interviewed at home or in a workplace make sure you find a quiet spot in which to talk.
- If you feel you need notes in studio put on a small single card. Rustling papers on radio and TV is distracting for you and the audience.
- Ask is it a panel discussion? Will there be other contributors? Will you be required to field listener queries via text/email or phone-ins to the show?

Social Media and blogging

Social media is an increasingly powerful tool to communicate your message to a wide audience. It is less targeted than many media outlets and it can be difficult to assess the impact of social media work. It is also important to view social media as you would make any public statement so consider your messages and engagement carefully. Nevertheless it is an important part of any communications strategy. Depending on your time and resources there are a number of social media outlets you can use to publicise your research and add to and engage in public debate:

Twitter

www.twitter.com

You can set up a twitter account and connect to other relevant accounts. You may also contact people directly using their twitter handles or contribute to debates by using a hash tag. Tweets are limited to 140 characters.

The following links provide researchers with good tips for using Twitter:

<http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/research/guides/management/twitter.htm?PHPSES SID=kpit9ocupje4is083jcmjui5c3>

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/09/29/twitter-guide/>

LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com

LinkedIn is a business orientated social network used by over 55 million members. Users can explore and build professional links. You can set up a personal account and also group or company pages which can be useful for researchers to link with others interested in their area.

The following article provides information for researchers using LinkedIn

<http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2012/12/20/linkedin-tips-for-scientists>

YouTube

www.youtube.com

Depending on your resources you may wish to use video as a tool for communicating your research. If you have the resources you may compile short videos to illustrate your work or create a channel.

Facebook

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Facebook lets users add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks organised by city, workplace, and school or college. You can also join and create groups according to your interests or areas of expertise.

Join academic social networking sites

Academics, researchers and students are increasingly using social communities as a way of meeting and conversing with people who share the same research interests. These sites offer an immediate way to monitor what other people are looking at in your field or research, or as a way to commission papers around online conversation you think is interesting. If there are not any groups talking about your research interests – set one up. Take a look at MyNetResearch (<http://www.mynetresearch.com/>) and Academici (<http://www.academici.com/>).

Start blogging

Wondering what to write about? What about:

- Your area of research and papers that you have published – and/or other related papers in your field of research.
- Conferences and training events at which you will speak.
- Your last conference – were there any interesting questions that came up?
- What do you think of any recent press coverage including your subject area?

The more you write, the higher your page will appear in search engine results pages when researchers are searching for content – especially as they are increasingly searching via Google Scholar.

This article contains great tips on blogging for researchers:

<http://sciencehastheanswer.blogspot.ie/2014/06/academic-blogging-getting-started.html>

More resources for using social media to communicate research

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Obm18sqhjHU>
- <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/07/26/a-to-z-of-social-media-for-academia/>

Assessing your media work

After all your hard work in communicating your research it is important that you keep track of coverage gained. For print publications this can be done fairly easily by searching online or preferably using LexisNexis.

You may also check with your university or funder press office if they use a press monitoring service and suggest adding search terms if you are doing media work for a set period of time e.g. on falls, dementia.

You can also easily set up alerts on Google News for no additional cost. For radio and TV you may be able to access recording online. You should collate and save all items of coverage for your reference. You may also assess your impact online by collating information on the number of users and engagement through the social media networks you use to communicate your research.

The advice in this CARDI publication is aimed at giving general information about media relations and helping to inform researchers who wish to engage with the media. It is also a useful reference for funders, user groups and universities.

Further and more specific advice on dealing with the media should be sought by researchers from their academic institution, organisation or funding body.

Further Advice and Help

In the appendix there are examples of some resources you may find useful including:

- Sample press releases
- Useful resources

Appendices

A. Sample press releases and resulting coverage

1. Press Release



Higher rates of heart disease and disability in Northern Ireland's over 50s

Thursday 26 March 2015

Older people in Northern Ireland are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease than those in the Republic of Ireland. They are also far more likely to have a limiting long-term illness and disability, according to a study funded by CARDI and led by researchers from the UKCRC Centre of Excellence for Public Health at Queen's University Belfast.

Prevalence of heart disease and rates of associated disability are higher among men and those in lower socio-economic groups in both countries.

The study, led by Professor Frank Kee, Director of the Centre of Excellence and Deputy Director of the Centre for Public Health, examined the rates and impacts of heart disease among people over 50 by analysing existing datasets in Ireland, North and South.

It also found significant differences in health behaviours linked with the risk of heart disease. While rates of obesity and smoking in the over 50s are higher in the Republic of Ireland, rates of physical inactivity, diabetes and severe depression are higher in Northern Ireland.

The prevalence of coronary heart disease is 12% in Northern Ireland compared to 8% in the Republic of Ireland, while prevalence of limiting long-term illness is 80% higher in Northern Ireland. The research highlighted the particular vulnerability of men over 50 and people in lower socio-economic positions.

Professor Frank Kee said: *"When examining datasets on health among older people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland it is apparent that rates of heart disease and associated disability are higher in Northern Ireland. Significant differences also exist along socio-economic, gender and age lines. The findings illustrate the need to tackle key risk factors, especially physical inactivity among older people in Ireland, both North and South."*

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Dr Roger O'Sullivan, Director of CARDI, welcomed the findings: *"Heart disease remains a leading cause of death and disability in both parts of Ireland and high by European standards. The number of adults who will have heart disease in their lifetime is projected to rise rapidly as our population ages. These new findings emphasise the need to bring forward initiatives to reduce the risks of heart disease."*

Further details on the research are available at www.cardi.ie

Ends

Notes to editors

The research team consisted of Dr Sharon Cruise, Queen's University Belfast; Mr John Hughes, Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency; Dr Kathleen Bennett, St James's Hospital, Dublin; Dr Anne Kouvonen, Queen's University Belfast and University of Helsinki; and Professor Frank Kee, Queen's University Belfast.

The full report is entitled 'Understanding disability in older heart disease patients in Ireland'. The research was funded by the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) under its 2013 data-mining funding programme. CARDI has prepared a research brief 'Disability in older heart disease patients' which summarises the main report and spells out some of the implications for policy and practice. Both are available at www.cardi.ie

Media contact: Nicola Donnelly at CARDI, tel (ROI): 086 7927684 or email: nicola@cardi.ie.

Coverage

Higher rates of heart disease in NI's over 50s

UTV [health](#) 26 Mar 2015

Story by UTV Staff, Belfast

Older people in Northern Ireland are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease than those in the Republic of Ireland, a study has found.

The study found higher rates of heart disease and associated disability in Northern Ireland.

They are also far more likely to have a limiting long-term illness and disability, according to a study funded by Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) and led by researchers at Queen's University Belfast.

Prevalence of heart disease and rates of associated disability are higher among men and

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those in lower socio-economic groups in both countries.

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It also found significant differences in health behaviours linked with the risk of heart disease.

While rates of obesity and smoking in the over 50s are higher in the Republic of Ireland, rates of physical inactivity, diabetes and severe depression are higher in Northern Ireland.

The prevalence of coronary heart disease is 12% in Northern Ireland compared to 8% in the Republic of Ireland, while prevalence of limiting long-term illness is 80% higher in Northern Ireland.

The research highlighted the particular vulnerability of men over 50 and people in lower socio-economic positions.

Professor Frank Kee said: "When examining datasets on health among older people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland it is apparent that rates of heart disease and associated disability are higher in Northern Ireland.

"Significant differences also exist along socio-economic, gender and age lines. The findings illustrate the need to tackle key risk factors, especially physical inactivity among older people in Ireland, both North and South."

Commenting on the findings, Dr Roger O'Sullivan, Director of CARDI, said: "Heart disease remains a leading cause of death and disability in both parts of Ireland and high by European standards.

"The number of adults who will have heart disease in their lifetime is projected to rise rapidly as our population ages. These new findings emphasise the need to bring forward initiatives to reduce the risks of heart disease."

© UTV

2. Press Release

Vulnerable older people at greater risk from inequalities in health behaviours

Thursday 29 January 2015

Older people on lower incomes and living in deprived areas across the island of Ireland have considerably worse health than better off people of the same age, according to a study by researchers from Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin.

This may be linked to differences in health behaviours, especially smoking and physical inactivity. The research, led by Dr Eibhlin Hudson and funded by the Centre for Ageing

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Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI), explores these differences by analysing existing datasets in Ireland, North and South.

The findings show that older people on low incomes are more likely to smoke and have insufficient exercise. In contrast regular alcohol consumption is more common among those on high incomes.

When comparing Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland the research found that smoking rates among people aged 50+ are similar (18% and 17% respectively). Many older people north and south do not have enough exercise but low physical activity is much more common in Northern Ireland (54%) than in the Republic of Ireland (30%).

The research also highlighted the particular vulnerability of older people who are single or widowed and disabled or in poor health. People aged 50+ who are single, widowed or separated/divorced are more likely to smoke and have low levels of exercise.

Dr Eibhlin Hudson, lead researcher, said: *"When examining datasets on health among older people in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland it is apparent that lower incomes are associated with poorer health and certain health-related behaviours such as smoking and low levels of physical activity. The research also highlighted that vulnerable older people should be targeted to help improve health outcomes in these groups."*

Dr Roger O'Sullivan, Director of CARDI, welcomed the findings: *"This research clearly illustrates the inequalities that exist in health behaviours and health outcomes in the older population. It contributes to a growing body of evidence that policy actions should be targeted at low income and other vulnerable groups to help improve the health and quality of life of older people in Ireland, North and South."*

Notes to editors

The research team consisted of Dr Eibhlin Hudson, Trinity College Dublin (now with Novartis); Professor David Madden, University College Dublin and Dr Irene Mosca, Trinity College Dublin.

The full report is entitled 'Examining inequalities in health and health behaviours' (Hudson et al, 2014). CARDI has prepared a research brief 'Inequalities in health behaviours' which summarises the main report and spells out some of the implications for policy and practice. Both are available at www.cardi.ie

For more information contact Nicola Donnelly at CARDI, tel (ROI): 086 2762397 or email: nicola@cardi.ie.

Coverage

Sunday Times



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B. Useful resources

Economic and Social Research Council

Impact Toolkit

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/impact-toolkit/>

European Commission

Guide to Successful Communications

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/science-communication/mediarelations_en.htm

International Longevity Center

[The Media Takes On Ageing - International Longevity Center](#)

Alzheimer's Society Ireland

Media guidelines for talking about dementia

<https://www.alzheimer.ie/About-Us/News-and-Media/Media-Guidelines-to-Dementia-Language.aspx>

Population Research Bureau

Communicating With Media Audiences

D'Vera Cohn, former Washington Post Reporter, shares her advice and strategies for speaking effectively with reporters and building positive ongoing relationships with the media.

View webcast ([Time: 14 minutes](#))

View PowerPoint ([PDF: 101KB](#))