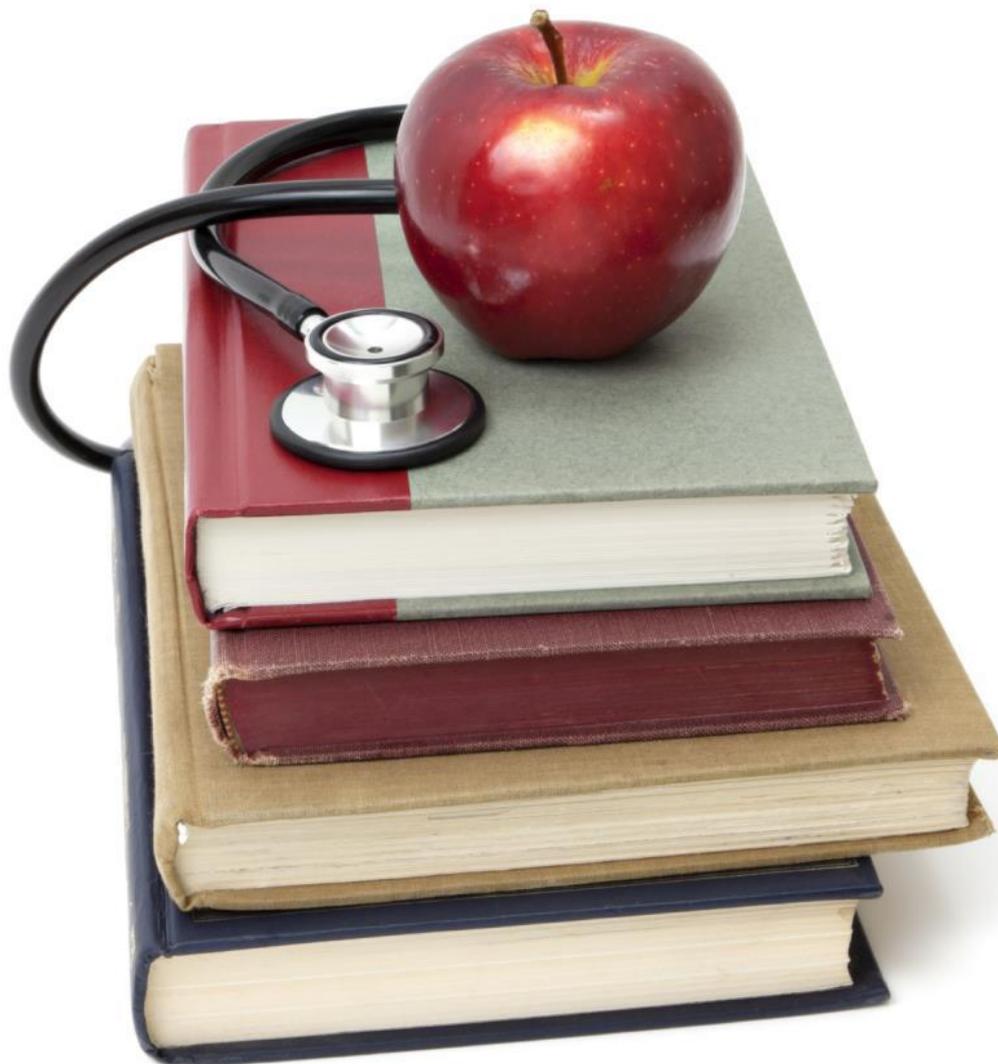




A HISTORY OF THE IRISH STUDENT HEALTH ASSOCIATION



About the Irish Student Health Association

The Irish Student Health Association (ISHA) is an organisation which serves as a forum in which members can discuss matters relevant to the provision, quality and effective management of third-level student healthcare in Ireland.

It provides the opportunity to share ideas, discuss issues of common interest, and communicate best practice in relation to student health. Our members are drawn from many different professions which contribute to healthcare in the specialist field of third-level education.

The Association is primarily divided into three main categories: The Doctors group of the Irish Student Health Association is known as DASH and consists of doctors involved in health services in third-level education in Ireland. The Nurses Association is known as NASH and represents the nurses working in student health in Ireland. The Secretaries Association of Student Health SASH consists of all secretaries/administrators involved in third-level student health.

In recent years, other Allied Healthcare professions (Physiotherapy, Psychiatry, etc.) and Health Promotion colleagues, who are attached to 3rd level institutions, have become included in our communication network and have linked up with ISHA via attendance at our annual educational conference.

Foundation of ISHA

The Irish Student Health Association was originally founded circa 1972. The inaugural meeting was held in Trinity College Dublin, with Dr. Jackie Wallace, TCD in the Chair. The Association initially catered for both University doctors and Boarding School doctors. Dr. David Thomas attended as the Medical Officer to Castle Park School.

Dr. Wallace, a Trinity Scholar in Classics, prior to studying medicine, in his opening address coined a new term for the sub specialty Student Health – ‘Hebeatrics’ (Hebe being the Goddess of Youth). He likened this to paediatrics and geriatrics.

Dr. Jackie Wallace was elected as the first President of ISHA. The first female president was Dr. Helen Watson, the doctor to Trinity Hall, then a female hall of residence in Dartry.

It was Dr. Watson who presented a Presidents medal, that now forms part of the Chain of Office, which itself was designed by West’s Jewellers, Grafton Street. Each year the chain is inscribed with the name of the serving president and the year.

Other early Presidents included the doctor to Castleknock College, Dr Robin Nelson TCD, Dr Robin Harland QUB, Peter Fahy UCD, Alan O’Grady and Sinead O’Brien.

Our first nurse President was Sister Ailsa O’Docherty of TCD. Since then, there have been a further four nurse Presidents: Brenda Lenihan UCD; Nurse Geraldine Mc Dermott(UCD); Nurse Hannah Glackin (LYIT); and current President (2017-2018) Nurse Laura Tully (AIT)

Indeed, it was agreed at the 2015 AGM, that the position of President into the future would alternate between the Doctors and Nurses of the Association.

In 2013/2014, the chain of office got misplaced, but with some persistence it was located and delivered to LYIT, where nurse Hannah Glackin got it repaired and restored to its former glory.

Decline and Resurrection

Through the late seventies, with the decline in the number of boarding schools, interest declined and regular annual meetings went into abeyance.

However those involved in Irish third level health, notably Robin Harland QUB, Robin Nelson, David Thomas, Sinead O'Brien TCD, Alan O'Grady and Peter Fahy, UCD and Robin Godfrey UCC became involved with the British Student Health Association and regularly attended their Annual General Meetings.

Dr. Robin Nelson was elected President of BASHE, British Association of Student Health in 1976, and with the support of his Irish colleagues, hosted the BASHE Conference in 1977 in Trinity College Dublin, and again in 1985. In preparation for the 1985 conference the Irish Student Health Association was revived once more.

The Association has had many ups and downs during its history, but there was always someone willing to take up the challenge of keeping the Association alive. In 2003 Nurse Hannah Glackin, along with Dr. Mary Mc Fadden and Ann Marie Kelly, hosted the conference in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Letterkenny and the following year in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone and from there the Association went from strength to strength, until it hit another bump in the road in 2013. The annual conference did not take place that year, but Nurse Alice Meagher from LIT together with the LYIT team resurrected it once more and brought the conference back to Letterkenny in 2014. That year, the LYIT crew broke new ground in developing the brand with a view to increasing awareness of ISHA. Under the leadership of administrator, Brenda Hamilton, an image was acquired from 'iStock' and incorporated on to the cover sheet of the 2014 conference programme as well as on to a new 'pop-up' promotional stand, which first saw the light of day at that Letterkenny meeting. That particular image of a pile of textbooks, apple and stethoscope has continued to be used to this day on our printed materials, the website and social media.

From Strength to Strength

The following year's conference was held in The Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Blanchardstown. The lead up to this conference, during 2014/2015 period, brought a further new development with regular teleconferencing being utilised for the first time by the serving executive committee for the organisation and management of the Association. This facilitated the setting up of an executive committee comprising of members from a variety of different 3rd level institutions from all around the country. It

was something that worked really well, aside from the small fact that many of the committee didn't physically recognise one another when they first met up for the annual conference at The Crowne Plaza Hotel, that was, until they spoke!

2006 was the year that heralded the Association's first foray into the world of IT and internet communications, with the introduction of the ISHA website. The site was developed by Dr. Brendan Clune and Nurse Barbara O'Connell, in association with IONIC Business Systems. Brendan and Barbara developed a logo for the association, which is still in use today (2018). The site went live in January 2007 and was officially launched at the conference in Dublin on 2nd March 2007.

The website remained relatively basic until it was revamped and upgraded in February 2016 by the serving ISHA executive committee, and in particular, Laura Tully, then Vice-President & Public Relations Officer. The committee also relaunched a new Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/irishstudenthealthassociation/>). Dr. Michael Byrne had helped to introduce ISHA to the Twittersphere (@the_isha). On stepping down from the executive committee, he passed the baton on to the then incoming President, Dr. Eoin Mac Donncha.

The Association is thankfully now back in a very strong and healthy position once more, with great numbers attending our annual conference and AGM over the past few years. Connections have been established with colleagues in various allied healthcare professions involved 3rd level student health, and there has been a re-establishment of links with 2nd level healthcare providers, particularly in the field of nursing. The Association and its members have also sought to engage with students' unions, both nationally and locally, and has forged closer links with our good colleagues in the UK Student Health Association. It has been supporting the National Women's Council of Ireland in their participation in a European wide research project (ESHTE Project) on addressing the issue of sexual violence and harassment among 3rd level students. The Association has also been proactive in supporting public health initiatives, including the successful 'No Fry Zone' campaign on Planning Laws in Co. Wicklow, and it is presently involved with the Alcohol Health Alliance of Ireland in its efforts to ensure the passage and implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill. These projects and involvements are a further extension of the desire of our members to ensure the continued improvement in the overall health and wellbeing of the students of Ireland.

A Living History – Updates & Corrections always Welcome

This history of the Irish Student Health Association is a 'living' one and can very much be considered to be a work in progress, **so please feel free to e-mail, tweet or use Facebook to get in touch**. If you have some memories you would like to share or if you can fill in some of the gaps, we would love to hear from you and it would be so greatly appreciated. Below is a list of past Presidents of the Association according to our beautiful chain of office (Thank you Dr. Thomas & Nurse Glackin!).

Past Presidents

As previously mentioned, the first Nurse President of ISHA was Sister Ailsa O'Docherty of TCD, and other past Presidents in the earlier years, included: Peter Fahy, Alan O'Grady and Sinead O'Brien

Presidents in the more recent history of ISHA, as detailed on the chain of office, include:

- Dr David Thomas TCD '99-'00
- Dr Abdul Bulbulia '00-'01 (Waterford IT)
- Dr Sandra Tighe UCD '01-'02
- Dr Paula Walsh NUIG '02-'03
- Dr Mary McFadden LYIT '03-'04
- RGN Geraldine McDermott UCD '04-'05
- Dr Brendan Clune DIT '05-'07
- Dr Michael Byrne UCC '07-'08
- Dr Denis Gaffney NUIM '08-'09
- Dr David McGrath TCD '09-'10
- Dr Fionnguala Lysaght NUIG '10-'11
- Dr Fiona Thompson UCD '11-'12
- Dr Niall Cahill '12-'13
- RGN Hannah Glackin LYIT '13-'15
- Dr Eoin Mac Donncha NUIG '15-'17
- RGN Laura Tully AIT '17-'18