

## **New Masters-Level Pharmacy Internship Programme Launched by Minister at RCSI**

**Tuesday, October 13, 2009:** The Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney TD, today launched a new National Pharmacy Internship Programme which will introduce a Masters in Pharmacy in Ireland for the first time. The new Programme will be delivered by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). The M Pharm will be awarded by the National University of Ireland and accredited by the PSI (Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland), the pharmacy regulator.

The Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney TD, who launched the new Programme today, welcomed the cooperation between the various stakeholders in bringing this important development to this stage.

Dr Terry McWade, Deputy Registrar of the RCSI, said: "RCSI has traditionally been a leader in post-graduate healthcare education in other professions and it is now our pleasure to extend this expertise to the profession of pharmacy as an important provider of healthcare in the State. This emergence has been made possible by the endeavours of the PSI and innovative policy direction from the Department of Health and Children. Delivery of the programme has been enabled by our expertise in the use and development of e-learning delivered through customised electronic platforms, which is a new and important model for the delivery of post-graduate pharmacy education. Professional development requires lifelong learning. For our interns this is the beginning of a new and exciting journey from which they will emerge to make significant contributions to the delivery of our healthcare system."

Ms Noeleen Harvey, President of the PSI, described the new National Pharmacy Internship Programme that offers the Masters as a milestone development for the profession that brings Irish pharmacy in line with international best practice. "The PSI is aware that Ireland is the last remaining EU Member State that does not award a Masters level pharmacist qualification and is one of a small minority of Member States in which an integrated five-year training programme is not delivered. This new Programme will ensure formal recognition of the learning outcomes achieved in the fifth pharmacy education and training year and a higher degree of M Pharm for new graduates for the first time."

Ms Harvey also welcomed the formal recognition and support that the new Programme gives to the tutor pharmacists, who mentor and guide the interns in the practice of pharmacy and who provide training opportunities for the intern to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be a competent pharmacist.

"This mentoring role is important for ensuring the professional development of these young pharmacists of the future and enabling them to become competent professionals, with all the skills necessary to contribute to patient care and safety and be valuable members of the healthcare team. In their own time, they will be the leaders of their profession and I feel that today we are laying the foundation stone for the future development not only of these young peoples' professional lives, but indeed the pharmacy profession as a whole."

The National Pharmacy Internship Programme will be provided for the next three academic years by the RCSI, with the assistance of the Schools of Pharmacy at Trinity College Dublin and University College Cork. Each intern will undertake a placement which will include the mandatory six-month clinical requirement under the supervision of a tutor pharmacist in either a hospital or community pharmacy.