



NEWSLETTER | 2016

Dear TILDA Participant,

As this landmark year for TILDA comes to a close, I am pleased to share the 2016 Newsletter with you. 2016 marks the 10th Anniversary of the founding of TILDA. To celebrate this wonderful occasion, we were delighted to welcome 600 attendees to Trinity on the 8th of September to celebrate 10 years of TILDA and to hear more about how you have made TILDA such a success. As I said on the day, the TILDA team and I wish to pay tribute to all who have helped us to unmask the important and often silent contributions that older adults make to Irish society. You have contributed to a rich legacy which will ensure a better quality of life for future generations by helping us to understand the process of ageing. Unfortunately, the number of attendees was limited due to space constraints, however you can see media coverage including RTÉ News footage on our website at www.tilda.ie under News and Events. There is also a short piece about the event on page 4 of this Newsletter.

2016 was also an important year for research findings. TILDA research on perceptions of ageing gained world-wide attention when researchers confirmed that the way we think about, talk about, and write about ageing has direct effects on our health. Another key piece of research was

the discovery of a cardiovascular predictor of mortality, a discovery with potential for monitoring health in older adults. These research findings are presented in detail on page 2.

A number of TILDA researchers also received awards for their outstanding contributions to ageing research. Dr Aisling O'Halloran was awarded a presidential medal at the 64th Annual & Scientific Meeting of the Irish Gerontological Society for her research on blood biomarkers for frailty. Dr Mark Canney won the prize for best oral presentation at Trinity College's Medical Gerontology Open Day for investigating the distribution of kidney biomarkers in community-dwelling older adults. Dr Catriona Murphy accepted the Institute of Community Health Nursing (ICHN) Dublin Research Award for her contributions to community health nursing.

We have so much to celebrate in 2016 because of your commitment to TILDA. On behalf of the TILDA team, thank you for your continued support.

Rose Anne Kenny

Professor Rose Anne Kenny
Principal Investigator

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WAVE 4 SUMMARY

The Wave 4 data collection is almost complete. To date, over 6,000 of you have had an interview while over 4,500 have returned a self-completion questionnaire - and this number is still increasing! In the next wave, there will be another health assessment and we are currently exploring ways in which we can provide you with even more feedback on your health and well-being.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS IN 2016



Maintaining positive attitudes about ageing is important for health and well-being

YOU'RE ONLY AS OLD AS YOU FEEL!

One of the most discussed pieces of TILDA research this year focused on how attitudes to ageing can have a direct impact on health. Older adults with negative attitudes towards ageing had slower walking speed and worse cognitive abilities two years later, compared to older adults with more positive attitudes towards ageing. This was true even after participants' medications, mood, their life circumstances and other health changes that had occurred over the same two-year period were accounted for. Speaking about the findings, research lead Dr Deirdre Robertson noted, "If negative attitudes towards ageing are carried throughout life, they can have a detrimental, measurable effect on mental, physical and cognitive health."



The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on at least five days per week, to total 150 minutes per week. This level of activity provides many physical and mental health benefits, including lowering the risk of falls, high blood pressure, stroke, colon and breast cancers, and depression, as well as providing more effective weight management and improved cognitive function.

What does *moderate intensity* mean? When engaging in moderate intensity activity, your heart rate will increase and you will be breathing harder than normal. You should still be able to talk – but not sing! Brisk walking is one of the simplest forms of moderate intensity exercise and, remember, you don't have to do it all at once. Build up to 30 minutes per



Adults should strive for 150 minutes of physical activity per week

day by being active for 10 minute bouts a number of times per day. So take a brisk walk, do some aqua aerobics, try ballroom dancing, tackle the housework or get your garden ready for spring. Be as active as your ability allows.

TILDA DISCOVERS CARDIOVASCULAR PREDICTOR OF MORTALITY

When we stand up, our heart rate speeds up and then settles back into its normal rhythm. The rate at which this happens in older people has been shown, for the first time, to predict mortality four years later. The research team at TILDA, in collaboration with Harvard University in Boston, USA, found that the speed of heart rate recovery in the first 20 seconds after standing up is a key predictor of mortality. This is because moving from a lying position

to a standing position is a major cardiovascular challenge. Heart rate increases rapidly in the first few seconds after standing as the heart has to beat faster to compensate for gravitational forces that propel blood toward the lower extremities and cause a drop in blood pressure. The heart beat then returns towards its normal rate. It is the speed of this heart beat recovery that is the key factor – the quicker it returns to normal, the better. This finding is an important marker of health and vitality that could be assessed quite readily in a clinical setting.



Professor Smith delivers his lecture to celebrate TILDA's 10-year anniversary

LECTURE ON IRISH IMMIGRANTS MARKS 10 YEARS OF TILDA

Hollywood movies often portray the Irish in America as a poor and uneducated race of people. Yet like so many other Hollywood storylines, this image is just a myth. In fact, Irish migrants to the United States during the first half of the 20th century were, on average, as well educated as other European immigrants to the United States. This is according to Professor James Smith, who presented his work on “Irish Immigrants and their Progeny around the World” to mark the 10th anniversary of TILDA. Professor Smith is the Distinguished Chair in Labor Markets and Demographic Studies at the policy-research institute RAND in California, and is the son of an Irish mother who emigrated to the United States. Professor Smith played a pivotal role in helping to establish TILDA and continues to support, advise and champion TILDA as Chair of TILDA's International Scientific Advisory Board. We are enormously grateful to Professor Smith for his commitment, dedication and guidance.

SPOTLIGHT: MARY O'SHEA



TILDA Clinical Research Nurse Manager

Mary is the Clinical Research Nurse Manager in TILDA. Mary qualified from St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin, and The National Maternity Hospital, Dublin. Prior to joining

TILDA, she worked in Mount Carmel Private Hospital. During her time there, she received an honours BSc in Nursing and Health Care Management. Mary received the Judith Chavasse Award from UCD for evidence-based practice in healthcare. Mary has practiced nursing in Newcastle, United Kingdom, and in the United States.

Tell us about joining TILDA

I joined TILDA in 2014 as the Clinical Research Nurse Manager. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the participants who travel from around Ireland to attend the Health Assessment Centre at Trinity College Dublin for Wave 3 health assessments. As part of these assessments, I worked with 22 enthusiastic and motivated nurses who conducted

nearly 6,000 health assessments on participants, equating to over 16,000 hours of tests.

What are you currently working on?

Recently, I have led the TILDA team in developing a Frailty Education Programme. Frailty is a distinctive health state related to the ageing process, in which multiple body systems gradually lose their in-built reserve. The Frailty Education Programme runs in conjunction with the National Clinical Programme for Older People and aims to provide front-line health care professionals and first responders with the knowledge to understand, recognise and treat frailty. This programme offers the tools that will empower healthcare professionals to provide a targeted approach to care services within the community and in clinical settings.

What would you like to say to participants?

I would like to thank all of them. I love my experiences at TILDA. It is great to work with such a motivated team of nurses and researchers. The real privilege, for me, is meeting our participants. They willingly give their time, share their stories and provide researchers with data so that Ireland can become the best country to grow old in. Roll on Wave 5! I look forward to meeting everyone again.

KEY EVENTS IN 2016

TILDA CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

In September, Trinity College Dublin celebrated the 10th anniversary of TILDA. More than 600 attendees took part in the celebration and learned about the impact that TILDA research has and continues to have. Speaking at the event, Professor Rose Anne Kenny stated, "We all have an extended lifespan now – men will live to 79, on average, and women to 83. We have found that life gets better as you move between 50 and 78, after which, it starts to dip. The challenge is for these years to be healthy and happy." Established in 2006, TILDA was designed to provide a nationally-representative picture of ageing in Ireland. Understanding the characteristics, needs and contributions of older persons in Ireland is key to healthy ageing. Professor Kenny continued, "By providing high quality data, TILDA advances informed decision-making at all levels and propels ageing research in Ireland into a position of global leadership." We thank our participants for your



TILDA participants, the research team, funders and others enjoy the 10-year anniversary event at Trinity College

continued support. Giving your time not only advances understanding about how we age, it also informs policy and practice, while providing jobs, education and training for scientists, nurses, clinicians, and interviewers.

MERCER'S INSTITUTE FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING OPENED BY PRESIDENT HIGGINS

In December, President Michael D. Higgins performed the official opening of Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing (MISA) at St. James's Hospital. MISA is a state-of-the-art facility for integrated clinical services and a hub for world-leading research in ageing. Led by Professor Rose Anne Kenny, MISA allows for the rapid translation of research, including research from TILDA, to improve health policies and services. In his address, President Higgins noted, "In a world where we can expect to see more and more people leading significantly longer lives, innovative and creative thought around the ageing process will become increasingly important." The President has spoken on many occasions on the



President Higgins opens MISA, the state-of-the-art facility for successful ageing at St. James's Hospital

importance of building a society that fully values its older citizens, particularly noting the value of TILDA in this regard.

KEEP IN TOUCH

If you have changed address, or will be away from the address that we have on record for you for a period of time, please let us know by writing, calling or emailing us. We want to make sure that you will not miss out on participating in the next wave of TILDA. We also welcome any comments you may have on the study.

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Staidéar Fadaimseartha na hÉireann um Dhul in Aois

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing