

Newsletter

April 12

Additional Funding Achieved

TILDA has recently been awarded grants of €700,000 from the National Institute of Health and National Bureau of Economic Research, USA and the Health Research Board in Ireland to research the harmonisation of TILDA health measures to similar ageing studies in Europe and the USA. The group will also study the impact of the recession in Ireland on physical and mental health and develop early biomarkers of frailty and age related decline.

Principal Investigator of TILDA, Professor Rose Anne Kenny, stated: "A global challenge is to improve quality of life in later years through reduction in the burden of disease and disability. TILDA is in a unique position to respond to this need and inform other countries' longitudinal studies because of the novel and detailed health assessments employed in the study. Many diseases associated with age share risk factors and mechanisms', early recognition of frailty offers an opportunity to develop treatments and preventative measures not available at present."

TILDA has also received an additional €795,000 in funding under the Health Research Board's Interdisciplinary Capacity Enhancement Awards scheme. The funding will allow TILDA to build the existing team by adding three new staff members in neuropsychology, social epidemiology and health economics. Professor Kenny said: "These appointments enable TILDA researchers to further investigate the biological, psychological, and social correlates of mental illness in ageing".



Prof. Rose Anne Kenny at the Launch of the European Year of Active Ageing

European Year of Active Ageing

President Michael D. Higgins officially launched the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations in February. The aim of the Year is to encourage and support the contribution that older people make to society by promoting active ageing. President Higgins called on older people to realise their potential at the launch. "If ageing is to be a positive experience it must be accompanied by opportunities to realise the potential of

all people and to participate in all facets of society. This is the essence of active ageing" the President said. Professor Rose Anne Kenny presented the keynote lecture at the event.

More information is available on www.activeageing.ie.

Please 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 can then inform your local interviewer and you will not miss out on participating in Wave 2 of the TILDA study. We would also welcome any comments you may have on the study!

Contact:

Jacinta at 01 896 4120
or Pauline at 01 896 2509

Email:

tilda@tcd.ie

Write to:

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)
Lincoln Gate,
Trinity College,
Dublin 2

Towards making Ireland the best place in the world to grow old

Dear Tilda Participant

This is the second of a series of newsletters which aim to keep TILDA participants up to date with TILDA's progress. This issue will focus on some of the results from Wave 1, as well as introducing some of the TILDA staff to you.

WAVE 2 BEGINS!

Over 8,500 people took part in the first wave of the study for which we are most grateful. We would now very much like to speak to all of you again to see how your circumstances and experiences have changed (or stayed the same) over the last couple of years. We look forward to your continued participation and trust that you will enjoy the experience. Similar to before, an interviewer will visit you in your home, sometime over the next few months. When the interviewer visits, they will ask questions about things we believe to be important in the lives of people aged 50 and over. The last time we visited you there was also a follow-up health assessment. There will not be health assessment during this wave. Instead the interviewer will take a measure of your handgrip strength and your walking speed. On behalf of TILDA and the countless citizens who are already benefiting from the knowledge generated by the TILDA study, I thank you most sincerely for your valued personal contribution.



Prof. Rose Anne Kenny
Principal Investigator



Ipsos Mori interviewers at one of several training sessions held in preparation for Wave 2 of TILDA.



Irish Heart Foundation

Preliminary data from the TILDA Health Assessments has shown that 41.8% of participants with Atrial Fibrillation, an irregular heart beat which increases the risk of stroke and heart attacks, were unaware of the condition. Also, 58% of men and 49% of women found to have high blood pressure had never been diagnosed by a doctor with the condition. TILDA is therefore actively working with the Irish Heart Foundation to develop a national awareness programme on both blood pressure and Atrial Fibrillation. The aim is to increase people's awareness of the symptoms and treatments for both high blood pressure and Atrial Fibrillation.

Influencing Policy

TILDA is actively working with policy makers on ways to improve health and health care, pensions, disabilities and lessen carer burden. We will launch a policy report in May which will detail these significant issues. A copy of the report will also be available for all of our participants.



Why are you important?

You are invaluable to our study. The information you provide is helping us to build up a picture of the circumstances of people aged 50 and over living in Ireland. This information will be used to assist the government in planning to provide health care and pension systems that meet people's needs for the next 30 years.

Most recent findings

Age Related Macular Degeneration

Macular pigment is a protective pigment found in the retina of the eye. There is some evidence that having low macular pigment is a risk factor for age-related macular degeneration. TILDA data suggests that factors such as age, smoking, body mass index (BMI) and high blood pressure can lower macular pigment levels so we are now exploring new possible therapies to treat macular degeneration.

Osteoporosis facts

Only 34% of women who showed evidence of Osteoporosis were aware of the condition prior to the TILDA Health Assessment. More worryingly, 100% of men who showed evidence of osteoporosis were unaware that they had the condition.

Health Effects of Education

In the 1960s, the Fianna Fail government made secondary education free for all. This ensured that people could stay in education longer to learn more and to gain more skills. The TILDA data showed that healthy behaviours such as exercise, good diet and not smoking are more likely in those who were affected by the education reforms - over 40 years later!

Depression and Blood Pressure

Orthostatic hypotension (OH) is a sudden fall in blood pressure that occurs when a person stands up from a sitting position. Sometimes this fall in blood pressure can cause symptoms of orthostatic intolerance (OI) such as dizziness, light-headedness or visual disturbances. The TILDA data showed that people with OH have greater levels of depression which suggests that sudden drops in blood pressure may cause damage in areas of the brain associated with the development of depression. This is important information which could help the prevention of late-life depression.

Helping others

Nearly one quarter of older people in Ireland provide some form of help to their neighbours and friends, on average for 8 hours per month.

State Pension Age and the Recession

The recession is having an effect on when people plan to retire. Smaller numbers are saying that they will retire at age 65 or earlier and larger numbers are saying that "they don't know when they'll retire".

The Psychic Costs of Migration

Life away from Ireland seems to have been challenging for most of the men who have now returned. We see this through higher levels of alcohol dependence among this group. However, for women, being away from Ireland may have been a positive life-experience.

Migration

22% of older people have lived abroad for more than six months. People who had left school after primary level were more likely to have emigrated than those who continued to secondary level education.

Risk Factors for Depression

For men and women of all ages, the risk of depression is most common among those suffering from chronic pain or urinary incontinence, or those who have a visual impairment. Women who have been widowed or separated at any age are more at risk of depression than men, apart from men who have been widowed or separated between the ages of 50 – 64 years. Also, men who have never been married are more at risk than women who have never been married.

Fear of Falling

Fear of falling is a common problem in older adults. It can cause some individuals to avoid doing certain activities thus resulting in reduced function and social isolation. Those who avoid activity because of this fear have unstable or irregular walking patterns which increases the risk of falls. These less active individuals also have poorer physical, psychological and cognitive health. Treatment programs for fear of falling are being developed.

Voluntary work

One in five older people aged 65 - 74 do voluntary work at least once a week or more.

TILDA Benefits young and old

Since beginning with two staff members in 2006, TILDA has grown to a team of 25 Research and Administrative Staff. In addition to these core staff members, TILDA is also providing employment to many Masters and PhD students.

Core TILDA staff

Principal Investigator	Prof. Rose Anne Kenny	Research Fellow	Dr. Irene Mosca
Project Director	Prof. Alan Barrett	Research Fellow	Dr. Vincent O'Sullivan
Research Advisor	Prof. Brendan Whelan	Research Fellow	Dr. Ciaran Finucane
Medical Director	Dr. Hilary Cronin	Research Fellow	Dr. Annalisa Setti
Statistician	Dr. George Sawva	Life Course Research	Dr. Siobhan Maty
Data Manager	Mr. Conor Moody	Epidemiologist Statistician	Dr. Bellinda King-Kallimanus
Survey Manager	Mr. Ian Clifford	Epidemiologist Statistician	Dr. Matthew O'Connell
Research Fellow	Ms. Claire O'Regan	Finance Administrator	Ms. Liana D'Emidio
Research Fellow	Dr. Joanne Feeney	Executive Officer	Ms. Jacinta O'Grady
Research Fellow	Dr. Orna Donoghue	Executive Officer	Ms. Pauline Walsh
Research Fellow	Dr. Aisling O'Mahony	Research Nurse	Ms. Laura Dunne
Research Fellow	Dr. Aisling O'Halloran	Research Nurse	Ms. Lorna Greene
Research Fellow	Dr. Yumiko Kamiya		

Staff spotlight



Orna Donoghue joined TILDA as a Health Research Fellow in March 2011. Her undergraduate degree was in Sport and Exercise Sciences and she graduated with a PhD in Biomechanics from University of Limerick in 2006. During this time, she also completed a Diploma in Physical Therapy at the Institute of Physical Therapy in Dublin. Before working in TILDA, Orna lectured in biomechanics at the University of Edinburgh. In TILDA, Orna's research is focusing on the factors influencing gait, balance, mobility and falls in older Irish adults.



Laura Dunne joined the TILDA health team as a Research Nurse in September 2009 and was involved in the pilot study before Wave 1 began. She helped with protocol development and also trained an array of nurses in the novel technologies used in the health assessment centre. She arranged and conducted health assessments on a daily basis in both the health centre and in participants' home. She graduated from DCU with a BSc in Nursing (Honours). She worked as a gerontology nurse in Beaumont hospital before she began her diverse role in TILDA.

Exploding the myth that life gets worse as we age

TILDA results have shown that Quality of Life continues to improve after age 50 and peaks between the ages of 65 and 75. At aged 83 quality of life is equivalent to aged 50 years - so life gets better as we age! These results come from Control Autonomy Self-Realisation and Pleasure which is an objective measure of our happiness and satisfaction with life. The higher the score - the better.

Quality of Life by Age

