



Newsletter

December 2015

Dear TILDA Participant,

I am delighted to share the 2015 TILDA Newsletter with you. This issue highlights recent research findings and illustrates the value of your participation in this longitudinal study. Due to your continued commitment to TILDA, we are learning about the experience of ageing in Ireland and can compare this with international standards. With each wave of data collection, TILDA offers researchers immense opportunities to investigate the health, economic and social components of ageing.

This was an exciting year for TILDA. Since March 2014, we have interviewed almost 7,000 participants in their homes with 5,500 participants also completing a health assessment. We have launched world-leading research on ageing and translated these findings into policies and programmes. In 2015, TILDA research was highlighted in national and international media including *RTE*, *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Examiner* and *The New York Times* to name but a few. Our research has formed the evidence-base for a number of reports at national and international levels including *The Healthy Ireland National Implementation Plan* and *The World Health Organisation's Physical Activity Fact Sheet for Ireland*. The data we collect not only contributes to understanding all aspects of ageing, but also supports jobs and attracts funding

to boost the Irish economy. Presently, 40 TILDA researchers are using the dataset to raise awareness of findings with healthcare providers, governments, industry leaders, and residents across Ireland. Recent funding awards allow TILDA research to be translated into international educational programmes through the Global Brain Health Institute and through national public awareness campaigns funded by the Health Research Board.

Our researchers are driving world-class research in ageing, training healthcare providers, launching in-person courses, developing online information, providing evidence to support policy decisions, and informing the development of similar studies around the world. In 2016, we will publish our Wave 3 Report and continue to highlight our research in local, national and international media.

Over the past six years, you have contributed immensely to ensuring Ireland is a great country in which to grow old. I extend my sincerest thanks for the time you have devoted to this study. It is certainly a gift to this generation and those to come. 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 DATA COLLECTION

Our data collection for Wave 4 will start in 2016 and will consist of home interviews and self-completion questionnaires only. We will commence next Spring, beginning with those of you who had your Wave 3 interviews in 2014.

After this wave of data collection, we are planning to provide you with opportunities to learn more about your own health and wellbeing. We will provide more information in our next newsletter so stay tuned. We look forward to seeing you all again in 2016!

KEY TILDA RESEARCH FINDINGS IN 2015

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

If you attended a TILDA health centre assessment, you may remember walking on a long gait mat. We used walking speed data from this test to examine how many older adults have enough time to cross the road at pedestrian lights. In Ireland, the green man appears for



6 seconds and most people have enough time to cross the road if they start to walk on this light. If pedestrians start to cross as the amber light appears, they must walk at a speed of 1.2 metres per second (m/s) to cross the road safely. TILDA found that 1 in 3 people aged 65-74 years

and 1 in 5 aged 75 and over walk slower than 1.2 m/s and, therefore, do not have enough time to cross the road. In addition to the potential road danger, an inability to cross comfortably can lead to anxiety, reduced physical activity and may limit social interactions. TILDA is working closely with Dublin City Council (DCC) to address this issue and, to date, the amber light duration has been increased at over 30 pedestrian crossings. We are continuing to work with DCC and city councils nationwide.

TIPS!

1. Start crossing the road when the green man appears.
2. Do not begin to cross if the amber man has already appeared as you may not have enough time to complete the crossing.
3. Avoid distractions while you are crossing the road as these will reduce your walking speed and may also increase your risk of trips and falls.

MEDICATIONS AND FALLS RISK

Many medications that are commonly prescribed for depression, incontinence, insomnia and respiratory problems have an effect on the messages being transmitted to the brain. This can lead to a number of side effects including blurred vision, increased heart rate, sedation and confusion. TILDA research shows that falls resulting in injury are more than twice as likely in men taking this particular group of medications. Falls have a major impact and can lead to injury, loss of independence and poorer quality of life. Identifying and managing the risk factors for falls is the first step in preventing falls. It is

important for doctors and pharmacists to regularly review medications taken by their older patients to reduce this risk. Before modifying any medication programme, it is important for patients to consult with their GP.



DIABETES UNDIAGNOSED IN 10% OF CASES

TILDA data shows that, in Ireland, 10% of older adults have type 2 diabetes (equivalent to 120,000 people aged 50 and over), with 1 in 10 unaware that they have the condition. A further 5.5% of the older population are at a high risk of developing the disease. Diabetes becomes more common as we age, with men more likely to develop the disease than women. It is also more common in people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, excess weight and low physical activity levels.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IS PREVALENT IN IRELAND

TILDA research shows that 64 people in every 100 over the age of 50 have high blood pressure, with almost half of these people unaware that they have the condition. High blood pressure is a leading cause of heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, premature death and disability. It is considered to be responsible for 45% of ischaemic heart disease and 51% of total stroke mortality globally. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked by your GP. The lead researcher of this study, Dr Catriona Murphy, speaks about her findings on page 3.



HOW DID THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AFFECT THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OLDER PEOPLE IN IRELAND?

We all know that the recession in Ireland was felt acutely, but TILDA researchers wondered what effect the economic crisis had on the health and wellbeing of the older population in Ireland. Using TILDA data and data from the Irish component of the Survey of Health, Retirement and Ageing in Europe (SHARE), researchers



found that while net assets fell by a staggering 45% between 2006/7 and 2012/13, measures of health and wellbeing remained broadly unchanged. The results support the findings of other studies which found that recessions do not have widespread negative effects on health and wellbeing.

FREE ONLINE COURSE: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING

Trinity College Dublin has developed a free online course that offers tips for healthy ageing and wellbeing. This course, Strategies for Successful Ageing, will run for five weeks, commencing in February 2016. Professor Rose Anne Kenny is the lead educator and she will be joined by a host of eminent Trinity College lecturers. Find out more and register at www.futurelearn.com.



RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT: DR CATRIONA MURPHY



Dr Catriona Murphy is a health researcher at TILDA with extensive nursing and community health experience. Catriona's current research is focused on the cardiovascular health of older adults.

Why is it important to examine the topic of high blood pressure?

While many people have heard of high blood pressure, most people who have this condition are completely unaware of it until it causes problems in their heart, brain, kidneys or eyes. High blood pressure can damage these different organs so it is important that high blood pressure is detected and diagnosed in a timely manner and that people with the condition receive appropriate treatment, information on the changes they can make to their lifestyle and ongoing follow up and support with their doctor.

How does TILDA research contribute to our understanding of high blood pressure in Ireland?

During the TILDA health assessment, we measure blood pressure a number of times, and during the home interview, we gather information on the medications people use. From this information, we are able to

determine how common high blood pressure is in the older adult population in Ireland. Our study estimates that 64 people in every 100 have high blood pressure. This is equivalent to 797,000 people over 50 years of age in Ireland. Almost half of those with high blood pressure were unaware that their blood pressure was high, suggesting that opportunities are being missed to identify and manage this important risk factor. This is significant information from a health policy perspective.

How will you use the findings from this research on high blood pressure?

It is important to raise awareness of the need to have blood pressure monitored on a regular basis and for everyone to become familiar with their blood pressure numbers. Our collaborator, The Irish Heart Foundation, runs high blood pressure awareness campaigns on an annual basis. We are currently raising awareness of our findings with nurses working in primary and community care. We have already met with practice nurses from the Dublin and Kildare region and have recently received funding from the Health Research Board to bring this awareness campaign to health professionals across the country. We believe that getting the message out to healthcare professionals is a key step in ensuring our research findings are translated into better healthcare for individuals.

KEY EVENTS IN 2015

TILDA'S 2015 CONFERENCE FOR POLICYMAKERS

In November, the 2015 TILDA Conference - Evidence for Policymakers was held at the Mansion House, Dublin, in partnership with Age Friendly Ireland, the Dublin City Age Friendly Alliance, and Dublin City Council. The conference was opened by Minister Kathleen Lynch, TD, and hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Críona Ní Dhálaigh. Key TILDA research findings were presented and a lively discussion ensued amongst participants. The conference was widely covered in national media. Details can be found in the News and Events section of our website: www.tilda.ie.



TILDA Conference - Evidence for Policymakers (L-R): Dr Graham Love, Chief Executive, Health Research Board; Mr Brendan Kenny, Assistant Chief Executive, Dublin City Council; Minister Kathleen Lynch, TD; Professor Rose Anne Kenny, TILDA; and Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health.

LAUNCH OF GLOBAL BRAIN HEALTH INSTITUTE

In November, The Atlantic Philanthropies awarded \$177 million (€138.4 million) to Trinity College Dublin and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), to establish the Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI), a ground-breaking initiative that aims to tackle dementia and improve health and dementia care worldwide. Dementia is among the most devastating illnesses worldwide, affecting over 48 million people globally. It is expected to double every 20 years, if there are no effective interventions. Almost 50,000 people are living with dementia in Ireland. As part of a 15 year programme, GBHI will train global leaders to carry out dementia research, deliver health care, and change policies and practices. TILDA and the new Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing at St. James's Hospital in Dublin are key training infrastructure for GBHI. The landmark award is the largest single programme grant that The Atlantic Philanthropies has ever made and the biggest philanthropic donation in Irish history.



Launch of GBHI (L-R): Professor Brian Lawlor, TCD, and Co-Deputy Director GBHI; Dr Patrick Prendergast, Provost, TCD; Ms Mary Sutton, Country Director for the Republic of Ireland, The Atlantic Philanthropies; Professor Rose Anne Kenny, TILDA; Professor Ian Robertson, TCD, and Co-Director GBHI.

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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