

## MMI Clinician Scientist Fellowship Programme

### 1. Background

In September 2007, the Higher Education Authority informed the five institutions that had bid for funding under PRTL 4 to establish Molecular Medicine Ireland and to organise, through MMI, a Clinician Scientist Fellowship Programme (CSFP), that they had been successful. The objective of the CSFP is to train the next generation of clinician scientists (academic medical leaders) with the unique and specialised knowledge essential to fulfil Ireland's research needs in translational medicine. This training programme transcends institutional boundaries to give fellows unparalleled access to the top biomedical researchers in the country and to state-of-the-art basic and clinical research facilities. The aim is to educate biomedical investigators who, motivated by the intellectual challenge of understanding disease at the molecular level, will lead the quest for new therapeutic strategies. The programme is to provide a systematic way to train this essential group of clinician researchers through a structured PhD programme for medical graduates of three years in length, with the majority beginning their Fellowships in July 2008.

### 2. Advertising, Promotion and Short-listing

MMI issued a call for expressions of interest in the programme in November 2007, with a closing date extended to 7 December 2007. The call was advertised in Nature, in the national press, in the medical press and on the DMMC/MMI website. 75 expressions of interest were received which were referred back to the participating institutions for the development of full applications. 51 applications were received by the deadline of 4 January 2008.

These applications were short-listed at institutional level to 40, which were circulated to the selection panel for review. The number of candidates called for interview was based on the number of places per institution that could be funded in this round (up to 27 fellowships in total).

### 3. Selection Panel

The selection panel consisted of the following members:

Professor Sir Gordon Duff, Florey Professor of Molecular Medicine, University of Sheffield

Professor Garret Fitzgerald, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and Pharmacology, University of Pennsylvania

Professor Dennis McCance, Professor of Cancer Research and Cell Biology and Director, Cancer Research Centre, Belfast

Professor Anthony Windebank, Professor of Neurology, the Mayo Clinic

Professor Janet Allen, Director, UCD Conway Institute of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science

Professor Brian Harvey, Professor of Molecular Medicine and Director of RCSI Research Institute

Professor Dermot Kelleher, Professor of Clinical Medicine Head of the School of Medicine, TCD, (alternates – Professor Michael Gill, Head of Department of Psychiatry, TCD; Dr Joe Keane, HRB Clinician Scientist, TCD/St James's Hospital)

Professor Tim O'Brien, Director, REMEDI Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway

Professor Michael Prentice, Professor of Medical Microbiology, University College Cork

Because of the number of applications to be reviewed, the panel was organised in two 'divisions'. The panel members were asked to score the candidates on the following criteria:

- 35 per cent of the marks for the suitability of the candidate
- 30 per cent of the marks for the quality and relevance of the research
- 20 per cent of the marks for the quality of the supervision
- 15 per cent of the marks for institutional support.

Candidates had to score at least 20 per cent of the marks for both suitability and quality/relevance of the research proposal before being considered for a fellowship. Where there were more candidates sponsored by an institution than fundable places in that institution, the panel ranked the candidates in order of merit.

#### 4. Panel recommendation

The panel met in two divisions on Thursday 31 January and Friday 1 February 2008. The panel interviewed 39 candidates. (One interview was deferred due to a family bereavement.) The two divisions of the panel met at the end of each day to discuss issues arising and to agree the overall recommendation. The panel qualified 21 applicants and recommended that they be awarded fellowships in the programme. The breakdown by institution is as follows:

Institution	Recommended Candidates
NUIG	5
RCSI	5
TCD	6
UCC	2
UCD	3
Total	21

#### 5. Board decision

The Board approved the recommendation of the panel that 21 candidates are qualified to be awarded Clinician Scientist Training Fellowships in the programme and agreed that the 21 qualified applicants be awarded fellowships, subject to the availability of funded places in each sponsoring institution.

Although six candidates proposing TCD as host institution were qualified by the panel, TCD has funding for four fellowships. Therefore, only the four highest ranked candidates proposing TCD were awarded fellowships. 19 Molecular Medicine Ireland Clinician Scientist Fellowships were awarded in this round.