

Campaign launched for vital rehabilitation services for brain injury survivors

‘Don’t Save Me, Then Leave Me’, Congress on Brain Injury told

Dublin Hosts World’s Largest Gathering of Experts at the 14th World Congress on Brain Injury, 29th March – 1st April 2023

A new campaign has been launched to improve rehabilitation services for brain injury survivors in Ireland at a World Congress being hosted in Dublin this week.

Speaking at the 14th World Congress on Brain Injury organised by the International Brain Injury Association (IBIA) in partnership with Acquired Brain Injury Ireland (ABII), ABII CEO and Co-Founder Barbara O’Connell called for an investment of €6 million per annum to meet urgent need.

“19,000 people in Ireland acquire a brain injury each year, and many of these end up unnecessarily in nursing homes long-term. This must end. The slogan of our campaign is ‘Don’t Save Me, Then Leave Me – give me a pathway home’.

“The truth is, in Ireland there is no clear pathway for survivors of brain injury. Once they’re discharged from hospital, their future is in the hands of a geographic lottery – the system is under resourced and under-funded. Assessment Teams and specialist brain injury Case Managers can play a key role in addressing these issues at minimal cost to the State.

“Today, opening the World Congress on brain injury, ABII is calling for €2m to establish a nationwide brain injury Case Management service and €4m for three National Assessment Teams for young survivors living inappropriately in nursing homes.

“This would enable survivors to move much more effectively from acute hospital care, through specialist in-patient rehabilitation if needed, and on to community-based services. Doing so also avoids delayed discharges from acute hospitals, frees up beds in our National Rehabilitation Hospital, reduces the burden of care on families and creates significant cost savings to the State.

“Too many brain injury survivors are left merely to exist, inappropriately placed in hospitals and nursing homes where they do not belong. We have solutions to help survivors rebuild their lives in their own communities – and we need urgent investment to make it happen.

“It is unfathomable that our Government would not take notice as the World Congress takes place in Ireland this week. Following this Congress, ABII will work closely with the Government and the HSE in order to make this happen,” Ms O’Connell said.

Opening the Congress via video link the Minister of State for Disabilities Anne Rabbitte said: “It’s very significant for our country to be hosting the world’s leading experts in brain injury research and rehabilitation for the next three days. In Ireland, we recognise the vital importance of investing in brain health and brain injury treatment at all stages of the neuro rehabilitation pathway, from acute hospital to home. Timely, individualised rehabilitation has the potential to increase independence, maximise ability and enable survivors to participate as active citizens in our communities.

“That’s why Government has committed to addressing the needs of those impacted by brain injury, including through our National Neuro Rehabilitation Strategy. We already have many of the components of an effective brain injury rehabilitation pathway in place to make Ireland a global exemplar in this field. This is a priority for Government and I look forward to working with those involved in the Congress and the sector over the coming months to implement our plans and realise their shared ambition.”

The Congress brings together brain injury professionals from across the world and many different disciplines. Leading Irish rehabilitation physicians, neurosurgeons, advocates and multidisciplinary

practitioners are among the keynotes, panellists and speakers at the Convention Centre in Dublin from Thursday until Saturday.

Brain Injury survivor Rosie Mangan set out why a brain injury Case Management service is needed in Ireland: "There's no continuum of service for brain injury survivors. According to our Government, when medically stable, survivors should progress from acute care to step down rehabilitation as close to home as possible. Unfortunately, even today, limited resources and long waiting lists result in many brain survivors being inappropriately placed in nursing homes. We feel abandoned, denied our human right to rehabilitation, and the opportunity to rebuild the life we fought for.

"The inappropriate placement of young brain injury survivors in nursing homes is a human rights violation. I very nearly ended up in one myself after acquiring my brain injury, and I am a young woman in my 30s. If it wasn't for the strength, support and dogged determination of my family, my life today would be completely different. We need to get this issue solved if we're to avoid yet another black mark for institutionalisation in our history. Let's empower our brain injury survivors, and get them back on a clear pathway towards more independent living."

Congress President and Principal Clinical Neuropsychologist at ABII Dr Brian Waldron said: "It is hugely significant for Ireland and for Irish brain injury research and rehabilitation to host this landmark event in Dublin. For four days, the world's leading minds in brain injury will platform the very latest evidence and findings in the field, right on our doorstep. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shine a light on the key issues surrounding brain injury – the leading cause of death and disability worldwide – and to influence our Government representatives, policy makers and those in our health services to account for the resources and research it requires."

Among the Irish experts to present is Mr. Philip O'Halloran, a Consultant Neurosurgeon at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham who will introduce a pioneering study he is leading on the effectiveness of headgear in reducing brain injury in rugby with support of the IRFU and World Rugby.

"We have assembled a world leading, independent panel of scientific and medical experts in brain health and brain injury to monitor this study. It represents an important part of the jigsaw of what is an ongoing international effort to protect amateur and professional players. We are currently focused on recruiting participants for the study, and I would encourage players from schools and clubs to consider getting involved."

Other areas of focus at the Congress will include – paediatric brain injury, brain injury from intimate partner violence, brain injury and the criminal justice system, approaches to and outcomes of neurorehabilitation; and advances in brain injury care.

Delegates attending include rehabilitation physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, neurosurgeons, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, nurses, case managers, advocates, legal professionals and all those dedicated to advancing research and treatment for patients with brain injury. A full list of Congress [presentations is here](#).

Further Information

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The International Brain Injury Association

Founded in 1993, the International Brain Injury Association (IBIA) is dedicated to the development and support of multidisciplinary medical and clinical professionals, advocates, policy makers, consumers and others who work to improve outcomes and opportunities for persons with brain injury. www.internationalbrain.org

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland is an internationally accredited provider of community-based neuro-rehabilitation services for people with an acquired brain injury and their families. The organisation works in communities across Ireland to support and empower people to rebuild their lives, as well as campaigning and advocating for the rights and needs of this hidden group in society. www.abiireland.ie

About the World Congress on Brain Injury

The 14th World Congress on Brain Injury will be held March 29-April 1, 2023, at the Convention Centre Dublin. Organised by the International Brain Injury Association (IBIA), the World Congress on Brain Injury is the largest gathering of international professionals working in the field of brain injury. The 2023 World Congress is being held in partnership with Acquired Brain Injury Ireland.

www.braininjurycongress.org