

Annual Report 2020



Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

Company Information

Chairman:

Mr Kevin O'Reilly
*Principal,
Beechdale Consulting*

Director:

Prof James Crowley
*(Medical Director)
Consultant Cardiologist,
Galway University Hospital*

Director:

Ms Marie Gavin
*(Company Secretary)
Associate Solicitor,
Ronan Daly Jermyn*

Director:

Dr Catherine Caulfield
*Chief Operations Officer,
Ovagen Group Ltd.*

Director:

Mr Mark Gantly
*Managing Director,
HP Galway (Retired)*

Director:

Dr Tom Walsh
*Consultant Geriatrician
Stroke Specialist,
Galway University Hospital*

Director:

Dr Faisal Sharif
*Consultant Cardiologist,
Galway University Hospital*

Director:

Mr David Toohey
*CEO and Founder,
SyncroPhi Systems Ltd.*

Director:

Mr James Ward
*Solicitor,
Patrick J Durcan & Co*

Director:

Mr Paul Carey
CEO, Carey Developments

Director:

Ms. Mary Heffernan
*Tax Director,
KPMG (Retired)*

Director:

Dr. Emer Curtis
*Lecturer in Accounting,
NUI Galway*

Director:

Pat O'Donnell
*SVP Global Manufacturing,
Allergan, now AbbVie (Retired)*

CEO:

Neil Johnson

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VISION.

Our vision is to lead in the prevention, control of, and recovery from cardiovascular disease and to serve as exemplars of innovation and best practice.

MISSION.

Our mission is to prevent heart disease and stroke, save lives, empower and support families, communities and future generations to take control of their health and well-being.

GOALS.

- Build healthy communities through support, education and empowerment.
- Amplify the patient voice.
- Pursue the highest level of cardiovascular healthcare.
- Facilitate, participate and collaborate in vital research.
- Build capacity in preventive healthcare nationally through the National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health:
 - Engage with policy makers and health practitioners in pursuit of excellence in preventive healthcare.
 - Develop innovative models of preventive care and service delivery.
 - Produce a new generation of scholars and leaders in cardiovascular health and disease prevention.
- Align with the World Heart Federation's mission and ambition to reduce premature death and disability from cardiovascular disease by 25% by 2025.

A message from the Chairman & CEO

Dear Friends,

2020 was unquestionably a very challenging year, not only for our organisation, but for our community and those living with or affected by heart disease and stroke. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our lives in ways we didn't think imaginable, but we are proud to say that Croí stepped up to the challenge and provided support as best we could to the people we serve.

Although the Croí Heart and Stroke Centre was forced to close to the public in early March, we offered our building to the HSE, who used it as a regional Contact Tracing Centre. Our Croí Team adjusted to remote working and developed first-in-Ireland virtual programmes to support people living with heart disease and stroke. We are proud to say that our organisation was to the forefront in responding to the needs of patients and carers, who were severely impacted by the pandemic through decreased access to health services, delayed or postponed appointments and procedures, leading to increased levels of anxiety, stress and worry. Our response through *Heartlink West* became a vital lifeline and we are deeply grateful to all those who supported us to develop and deliver this initiative.

Throughout the year, we continued to support the development of the National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health in its mission to prevent and control cardiovascular disease for all. In addition, our support of the Global Heart Hub is aligned with our work in developing a national patient alliance to provide a voice for those living with heart disease and stroke.

This report illustrates that despite COVID-19, our staff responded to all the challenges; pivoted to online and hybrid health programme delivery, and innovated in digital revenue generation, to allow us achieve our mission of supporting those most in need.

As we are funded entirely through our own revenue generation activities, we could not do this important work without your ongoing support and for this we are deeply indebted.



Mr Kevin O'Reilly
Chairman



Mr Neil Johnson
Chief Executive

2020 Highlights



30+

fundraising events
organised to
support Croí



2,000+

cocooning support
calls made to older
adults at the start of
the Pandemic

Due to COVID-19, the
Croí Centre closed in
March, 2020.

To play our part
in supporting the
National emergency,
we provided our
building to the HSE
Contact Tracing Team.



2,000+

participated in our
virtual Night Run



100+

attended our virtual
Stroke Support
Groups



9

students graduated
from the MSc in
Preventive
Cardiology



80 - 100

calls per week to
Heartlink West



384

people participated
in our virtual health
programmes



200,000+

page views on our
website
www.croi.ie



20,820

followers on Facebook,
Twitter, Instagram &
LinkedIn



Responding to the Pandemic



Croí Supports Local Effort to Combat COVID-19

Croí plays its part in supporting the HSE and Galway University Hospital in the fight against the Coronavirus.

Like all charities, Croí was severely impacted by the Coronavirus, both operationally and financially. In March 2020, we ceased all face-to-face programmes and classes in the Croí Heart & Stroke Centre as many of the individuals we deal with are in the highly vulnerable group should they contract the virus.

With all programmes ceased, we had an empty building which is adjacent to GUH, and we felt that it could be put to good use in the battle against COVID-19. We are delighted that the HSE was able to use the Croí Heart and Stroke Centre as a regional Contact Tracing Centre during the crisis.

While the Croí building was being used for other purposes, the Croí Health Team remained available and provided daily support to people living with heart disease, obesity, diabetes and recovering from stroke. We launched a telephone helpline (Heartlink West) and regularly provided updated information through the telephone helpline and the Croí website (www.croi.ie) and across all Croí social media channels (@croiheartstroke).



Commenting on the impact of COVID-19 on Croí, CEO Neil Johnson said, "All charities are being hit very badly by the current crisis. For Croí, we are no different, all our income lines have literally dried up at a time of greatest need for the supports we provide to those who are most vulnerable to the Coronavirus. We are heartened to still be receiving donations from some individuals and organisations who are in a position to do so. We know we will manage to get through this difficult period and we remain available to patients and carers to support them in whatever way we can."



Croí's Virtual Response to support people living with heart disease and stroke - New Service Launched



Croí is responding to the increased needs of those living with heart disease and stroke, as a consequence of COVID-19. Since the beginning of the Coronavirus crisis, Croí has been experiencing an ever-increasing demand for information, support and advice from heart and stroke patients and their carers.

"Our health team of community nurses, dietitians, physios and exercise specialists are receiving phone calls, emails and significantly increased web and social media correspondence from all over Ireland – with the greatest demand being from the west of Ireland," says Croí CEO, Neil Johnson.

With funding support from local and national companies, **Croí has launched a new community support service across the West of Ireland** – Heartlink West – with endorsement from the cardiology services of the Saolta University Healthcare Group.

Heartlink West provides FREE support from our community based, multi-disciplinary health team, led by highly-experienced cardiac nurse specialists. Concerned individuals can connect with us through a telephone helpline and daily 'virtual health chats'. Those who call the helpline can speak with Nurses, Dietitians, Physios and Exercise Specialists.

Heartlink West is available Monday – Friday from 9:00am – 5:30pm. Call 091-544310 or email healthteam@croi.ie.

Huge thank to all our supporters who made this initiative possible. See www.croi.ie/heartlinkwest for the full list of supporters.

Responding to the Pandemic

Heartlink West service proves a huge success!

**Nurse-led COVID-19
patient and carer
support service**

*Delivered by our
multi-disciplinary
health team*



Responding to on average
80 support requests per week

Monthly virtual
health chats



Over 15,000 visits to our
COVID-19 information webpage
(April - December 2020)



Over **160,000** people reached
through our Croí Connects
video series, where experts
provide a Q&A session on
cardiovascular health issues.

**Croí
Connects**

Heartlink West is promoted through
HSE channels and Croí communication
channels. Created **over 1 million
opportunities to see** across traditional
and digital channels.

“

Croí has been a lifeline for us. We received so much help - a Nurse checks in with my husband weekly and we have been provided with access to numerous resources. Nick is doing good now... we are so grateful for the help we received from Croí.

- Anne, Stroke Carer for husband, Nick

”

Responding to the Pandemic

#JustGo Campaign helps to save lives

In June 2020, Croí launched a national 'patient-to-patient' confidence building campaign aimed at saving lives and reducing disability by encouraging those with symptoms of heart or stroke emergency to seek medical help without delay.

The #JustGo initiative reaffirmed medical advice to always act quickly when it comes to symptoms of a heart attack or stroke. 'Time is muscle' – the longer you wait with a heart attack, the more damage occurs to your heart muscle or in the case of a stroke, to your brain.

The campaign, developed by the Global Heart Hub in partnership with FH Europe (The European Familial Hypercholesterolaemia Patient Network), was in response to the fear of COVID-19, which was keeping almost half of those suffering from a heart attack away from hospitals, and now across the world, doctors are reporting that those who delay in seeking medical help are in a far worse condition when they finally arrive at hospital, and it's often too late to benefit from the life-saving treatments that are normally available to them.

"It's one of the unintended consequences of COVID-19 that people suffering heart attacks and strokes are delaying in seeking medical help, resulting in worse outcomes. Also, people living with known heart conditions who are experiencing new

or worsening symptoms are delaying before calling their doctor or going to hospital," says Neil Johnson, CEO, Croí.

National Clinical Societies and international organisations such as the World Heart Federation, World Stroke Organisation and the European Society of Cardiology were all united on this important message.

Professor Jim Crowley, Consultant Cardiologist, Galway University Hospital and President of the Irish Cardiac Society, said, "In Ireland, there has been a large decrease in cardiac admissions to hospital (across all cardiac conditions), in some locations a decrease of as much as 80%, and there has been a significant decrease in hospital interventions both surgical and less invasive of up to 35% across hospitals. This is very worrying as we know cardiovascular disease has not gone away and the prospect of a surge of patients with advanced cardiac symptoms in the coming weeks and months as an indirect consequence of COVID-19 is concerning."

The #JustGo campaign message was simple and clear – If you are experiencing the symptoms of a heart attack, – Don't delay – Every minute counts. If you have chest pain or other heart attack symptoms – such as pain in the throat, neck, back, stomach or shoulders that lasts for more than 15 minutes – you must call an ambulance.

Croí's Just Go campaign generated **6,870,000** opportunities to see the campaign message nationally across print, online, radio, social and TV coverage.

WHEN YOUR HEART SAYS SO...



Noel Carroll: When Your Heart Says So, Just Go!



Liam Lavery: When Your Heart Says So, Just Go!



Prof. Bill McEvoy: When Your Heart Says So, Just Go!



Robert Upton: When Your Heart Says So, Just Go!



Margaret Keady: When Your Heart Says So, Just Go!



Billy Fitzpatrick: When Your Heart Says So, Just Go!



Croí's campaign was supported by national societies and organisations, including: The National Heart Programme, Ireland; Irish Cardiac Society; Heartbeat Trust; National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health; Irish College of General Practitioners.

Health Programmes



Croí Launches new MySláinte Virtual Programme

CR MySláinte.

In 2020, in response to the pandemic, Croí launched MySláinte - a new 12-week Virtual Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme. The first-in-Ireland, online programme gave participants and families the information, support and advice needed to return to everyday life post a cardiovascular event, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Throughout the programme, participants worked with a team of healthcare professionals, including a Specialist Cardiovascular Nurse, Physiotherapist and Dietitian. They helped support, motivate and empower participants to take control over their medical and lifestyle risk factors, so that people could live well with their cardiovascular condition. Our goal was to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make changes to their lifestyle in a realistic way that could be sustained long-term.

'The doctors are there to save your life, but MySláinte is there to help you live'

- David Walker, Co. Sligo



'The programme was very good. I live in a very rural area, so the virtual meetings were brilliant. I didn't have to worry about travelling!'

- Gerry Sweeney, Co. Mayo



'MySláinte has shown me that there is life after a heart attack and that there's a life for me'

- Niall Nugent, Co. Galway



The programme is funded by the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019, under Grant Agreement Number 121 to support the delivery of services which focus on prevention, community care and integration of care across all health and social care settings.

Sláintecare.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Croí's Programmes and Support Groups go Virtual

Croí Referral Programmes

Throughout 2020, **384** participants were referred to nine virtual, 10 / 12 week lifestyle education programmes, including CLANN and MySláinte, with access to a new online platform and live workshops with the Croí Health Team.

The programme was mainly delivering through a combination of online resources, with an interactive resource pack, tools to track progress and enhance motivation along with 1:1 telephone support.

Virtual Classes

Throughout 2020, Croí offered 12 different exercise classes for all fitness levels using Zoom as the online platform. Classes included Back to Fitness, Resistance Training and Yoga.



Virtual Stroke Support

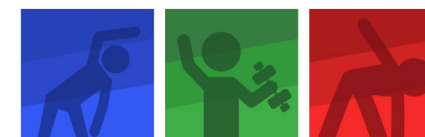
Croí held a monthly Galway and Mayo Stroke Support Group, moving to virtual delivery in response to the pandemic. Monthly support groups were also in place for relatives/friends of those living with a stroke.

In addition, Croí provided a Virtual Communication Group for people with communication difficulties as a result of stroke. Throughout 2020, the group meet approximately every 2 weeks and the meeting was facilitated by a Speech and Language Therapist.



Croí Connects

The new Croí Connects Series (online live interview with a health specialist) proved a huge success throughout 2020, with 14 sessions recorded covering topics such as heart disease, CPR, diet, diabetes, obesity, stress, sleep, stroke, heart failure, heart valve disease, exercise and more!



Home-based workouts

Our new home-based exercise videos were a huge success, with over 13,000+ views on our website!



Croí and Mayo GAA join forces to create Healthy Partnership

Mayo GAA partnered with Croí throughout 2020 to raise awareness of heart disease and stroke and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Croí CEO Neil Johnson said: "This great partnership allowed us to highlight the importance of healthy and active ageing across County Mayo. In Ireland and across the world, people are living longer, and Mayo has one of the highest rates of people over the age of 55 compared to the rest of the country. As we age, heart disease and stroke become more prevalent. Croí Third Age Mayo promotes and supports the heart health and well-being of the over 55 population in the county."



Close To The Heart – Mayo Team Wore Croí's Message at Mayo Vs Kerry Game

On February 29th at the Allianz football league game between Mayo and Kerry, with thanks to the generous support of Mayo GAA's main sponsors Intersport Elverys, the Mayo team wore a special, one-off jersey carrying Croí's logo in an effort to put the spotlight on heart health for over 55's across the county. The jersey called on people to own their heart health and 'Check it. Sort it.'

Croí was on-site at An Sportlann, Castlebar and Elverys MacHale Park to share information about the Croí Third Age Mayo project.

Heart disease, stroke and diabetes are more common as we get older. If detected early, many heart conditions such as high blood pressure, heart valve disease, heart failure and atrial fibrillation (irregular heart beat) can be treated so that people can have a longer and better quality of life.



Men's Health Week 2020

Men's Health Week (MHW) 2020 ran from Monday June 15th until Father's Day, Sunday June 21st.. The theme was: 'Restoring the Balance, Be part of the solution'. 2020 was an exceptional year in many ways. All aspects of life in Ireland continue to be shaped by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It has had a major impact on men's health.

Throughout the West, the HSE collaborated with Croí and many other voluntary organisations to provide information and to assist men throughout the region to be more aware of their health. Themes that were promoted during the week included mental health, heart health, cancer prevention, physical activity and rethinking what you drink.

Two pre-recorded virtual panel discussions focusing on healthy lifestyles, chronic disease prevention and mental health and wellbeing were also promoted. These sessions were broadcasted during men's health week on the Croí website (www.croi.ie) and were shared across various social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter. They included expert advice and tips, as well as personal stories from some well-known personalities from the region.



Paul Gillen, Health Promotion Officer, HSE; Pádraig Ó Céidigh, Former Senator; & Patricia Hall, Croí Cardiovascular Nurse Specialist.

Other events:

- Croí delivered blood pressure screening to ESB Galway and Boston Scientific staff as part of the Wear Red for Women initiative.
- Croí delivered educational sessions with Galway City Council and HSE CHO2 as part of their staff initiative 'Move More at Work'. (17 sessions delivered across Galway, Mayo & Roscommon)
- Croí delivered a workbook for Irish Life/Medtronic as part of a staff health and wellness initiative along with a 5 week 'Let's get Healthier together' corporate programme with live webinars on various heart health topics.

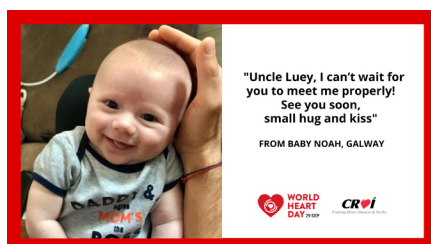
Health Campaigns



Celebrating World Heart Day

On World Heart Day, September 29th, Croí connected with people from all over the West of Ireland, including heart patients, nurses, Gardai, farmers, children, volunteers and more to share why they are Using Heart on World Heart Day.

Croí encouraged the public to Use Heart to fight cardiovascular disease... for your loved ones, society, and you.



World Stroke Day Webinar

To mark World Stroke Day on October 29th, Croí held a free public webinar to share information on stroke and stroke recovery - over **300** people registered to participate.

"As many as 1 in 5 people in Galway will have a stroke at some time in their lives. A stroke which is a 'brain attack' – is to the brain, what a heart attack is to the heart," said Croí.

"Stroke is one of the biggest causes of death and disability across the world," says Croí CEO Neil Johnson. "A stroke, which is a blood clot or bleed in the brain, can be fatal and cause death or cause irreversible damage to different parts of the brain which control, for example, our speech, our thinking or our movement. Many causes of stroke are completely outside of our control, however, there are some causes which we can prevent, such as high blood pressure or untreated heart rhythms such as atrial fibrillation.

To mark World Stroke Day, Croí invited people to a free webinar on Thursday October 29th, 2020, to learn more about stroke, stroke recovery and how to prevent one. A panel of local medical and nursing experts spoke on the causes and signs and symptoms of a stroke while a local stroke survivor shared her experience of stroke, stroke recovery and living life after a stroke. The event was supported by local company, Surmodics (Ballinasloe) who

are corporate partners to the Croí Stroke Programmes & Supports.

Announcing details of the event, Croí CEO Neil Johnson says "this is a great opportunity to learn more about stroke, its impact and most importantly the steps we can take to reduce our risk of a stroke. People usually think of a stroke as an older persons problem but unfortunately, stroke has no respect for age or gender. In fact, we are increasingly seeing more cases of 'young and working age' strokes. The impact of a stroke can be devastating both for the survivor and their families. While incredible advances have been made in terms of stroke detection and stroke treatment, we have a long way to go in Ireland in terms of stroke recovery and rehabilitation post hospital discharge."

Guest speakers on the Croí World Stroke Day Webinar on October 29th were:

- Dr Niamh Hannon, Stroke Specialist, Galway University Hospital
- Trish Galvin, Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Stroke Care, Galway University Hospital
- Ciara Breen, Senior Occupational Therapist, Galway University Hospital
- Norita Ní Chartúr, Stroke Survivor

Fundraising Campaigns



Croí launches its first virtual event! Discover the Beauty of The West Coast with Croí's Couch to Wild Atlantic Way

Croí launched a new virtual challenge along the Wild Atlantic Way, encouraging people to get moving and raise funds to help support people living with heart disease and stroke.



Croí's Couch to Wild Atlantic Way took runners, walkers and joggers on a virtual journey down counties along the west coast, from Donegal to Clare. Participants logged their daily kilometres and reached stunning discovery points along the way on an interactive map, including Malin Head, Achill Island, Cliffs of Moher and Loop Head Lighthouse. The challenge was supported by Laya Healthcare.

"We are so delighted with the response to this stunning challenge. Exercise was restricted to within a 5km radius, but this new challenge opened up our walks and runs virtually to the wild west coast! Our coastal challenges offered routes to suit all

abilities over the six weeks – from the Coast of Clare at 6,000 steps a day, to a more challenging route with the Coast of Mayo at 16,500 steps a day," said Christine Flanagan, Director of Fundraising at Croí.

"I was delighted to take part in this virtual challenge in aid of Croí. It's a great way to keep up the activity levels, while supporting vital services for people living with heart disease and stroke. I completed the Galway coastal challenge and reached stunning discovery points along the way," said Kevin O'Reilly, Chairman, Croí Board of Directors.

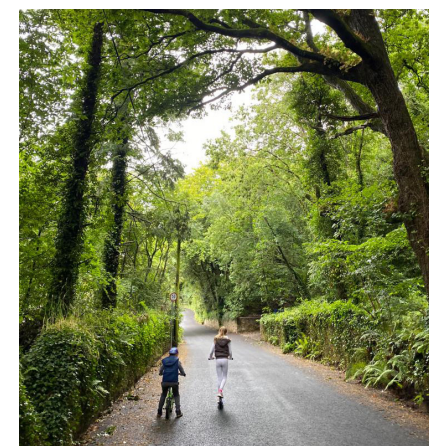


Kevin O'Reilly,
Croí Chairman taking part in the
Wild Atlantic Way Challenge

Cillian Morris, Business Development Manager at Laya Healthcare, added, "As Croí's Health & Wellbeing partner, we're very proud to support the charity in continuing to promote the importance of heart health in a virtual world."

Funds raised supported heart and stroke services, including Croí's new helpline, Heartlink West. The challenges facing people living with heart disease and stroke are now greater than any that have come before, and the Croí health team is experiencing increased demand for support services. This event helped Croí to continue to respond to the needs of the community during this difficult time, when people living with heart disease or stroke are at greater risk if affected by COVID-19.

The virtual challenge was launched on June 10th and ran for 6 weeks. Over 300 people took part in Croí's first virtual event! In addition, we had over 170 participants take part in our team challenge, where companies such as Surmodics, Edwards Lifesciences, Baxter Healthcare and HID Engineering brought together their employees virtually to take on the challenge together.



Fundraising Campaigns



My Summer Cycle for Croí

Croí launched “My Summer Cycle for Croí” on the August Bank Holiday weekend 2020.



Members of the public were invited to join Prof. Jim Crowley, Consultant Cardiologist at Galway University Hospital; former Galway hurling star, Ollie Canning; and cycling clubs across the country for a cycle to raise funds in support of those affected by heart disease and stroke. Croí asked that cyclists follow guidelines on social distancing and cycle their favourite local route on the August long weekend in aid of Croí.

Prof. Jim Crowley said, “This was great event to raise much-needed funds for Croí as it supports people living with heart disease and stroke, especially during these difficult times. And it’s great to get out on the bike, bring the family and cycle in support of your own heart health!”

Croí’s Director of Fundraising, Christine Flanagan, encouraged everyone to bring their family, friends or team mates together for Croí’s Summer Cycle – all ages and cycling abilities were welcome to take part and help us raise much-needed funds to support our work in fighting heart disease and stroke.

Croí’s Summer Cycle was supported by long-standing sponsor Corrib Oil, together with Al Hayes Motors and Challenge Cycling Club.



Fundraising Campaigns



Croí Night Run Attracts almost 2000 participants!

The 6th Annual Croí Night Run (5km) on October 9th was yet another in a line of charity fundraising events that had to be 're-imagined' due to COVID-19. Despite having to be changed to a 'virtual event', the Night Run exceeded all expectations, attracting over 2,000 participants and raising over €70,000.



Thanks to the event sponsor, Evergreen Healthfoods, 100% of proceeds from this event went directly to Croí. The media sponsor, iRadio, partnered with Croí in the run up to the event and throughout the day with motivational programming to encourage runners as they took on their 5k.

One of the unexpected benefits of becoming a 'virtual' event was that runners and walkers from all over the west of Ireland and indeed from as far away as Perth, Australia and New York, USA were able to participate. Just under 2,000 people across towns and villages throughout counties

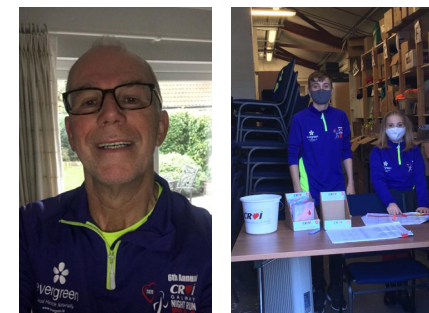
Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Donegal, Clare and Limerick, together with hundreds of people throughout Ireland, UK, Europe, Australia and USA did their own 5km walk or run on Oct 9th or on subsequent nights in support of the fight against heart disease and stroke in the West of Ireland.

"While we were disappointed not to be able to have our annual Night Run on the Salthill Promenade this year, our first priority is to protect those we serve as they are most at risk of COVID-19, so we decided to pivot to a virtual event. We have been overwhelmed by the show of support from all of those who have joined us in the new format," says Croí's Director of Fundraising, Christine Flanagan.



Speaking after the event, Croí CEO Neil Johnson said "the level of support this year has been phenomenal. Despite all the challenges of the pandemic, people has shown enormous generosity and demonstrated huge support for our work. At a time of greatest need, we are hugely grateful to everyone who supported us. The

funds raised this year will be used to support our COVID-19 Response Initiatives which include 'Heartlink West' – a dedicated phone and on-line support service for those living with or affected by heart disease and stroke. Our multi-disciplinary health team are responding to over 80 calls per week from across the west of Ireland from those with heart and stroke concerns and worries as a consequence of Covid-19."



Fundraising Campaigns



Community Fundraising

Curry GAA Run to Ruislip

In May 2020, members of Curry GAA in County Sligo completed a virtual 'Run to Ruislip' in aid of Croí and in memory of their fellow club member, JP Duffy, who passed away of a heart attack in November 2019. The club ran a combined total of 858km and raised an incredible €44,000 in aid of Croí.



Mizen to Malin

In September 2020, Croí was chosen as a beneficiary charity from Lecarrow Lazars Cycling Club's Mizen to Malin challenge. The proceeds donated to Croí were attributed to the Darragh Kenny Memorial Fund, which the club contribute to every year.



V-Everesting Challenge

In May 2020, a group of Mayo Cyclists took on a virtual 'Everesting' challenge in which they cycled the 8,848m height of Mount Everest in aid of Croí, raising over €20,000.



Fundraising Partners

Kavanagh Group Support Croí's Life Saving Work In Mayo



Croí was delighted to have been chosen as Kavanagh Group's 2020 Charity of the Year. On February 7, the Croí Health Team visited four of the Kavanagh Group stores, including Westport, Castlebar, Kiltimagh and Claremorris, delivering free heart health checks to customers and to celebrate the launch of this great new partnership.

"We are so delighted to have been chosen by the Kavanagh Group as Charity of the Year. Our work in Mayo is so important – we want to raise awareness of the risk factors for heart disease and stroke as so many of these cases are preventable! The support of Kavanagh Group allows us to continue our life-saving work and support the people of Mayo," says Christine Flanagan, Croí Director of Fundraising.

"We are very excited to join forces with Croí in the fight against heart disease and stroke. We want to promote good health and well-being with our employees and customers, and Croí's work in Mayo is so important for the community," says Noel Kavanagh Jnr, Managing Director.

Quidel 100km Challenge For Croí

The Quidel Ireland team took part in a Quidel 100 km Challenge on Saturday 23rd of May with 100% of proceeds in aid of Croí.

"Croí has always worked tirelessly to respond to the needs of those living with cardiovascular disease and will continue to do that during the COVID-19 crisis. Those that they serve are also the most vulnerable to COVID-19 and with your support, they can continue to provide them with ongoing support they will need over the coming months." - Team Quidel.

Thank you to our Volunteers & Supporters



Family Support - Croí Apartments



As part of our patient and family support services, we provide free accommodation and other supports in our Courtyard Apartments at Croí House. At a time of crisis and trauma, we help families stay close to their loved ones undergoing surgery or receiving stroke or cardiac care at Galway University Hospital.

The Croí Courtyard Apartments consist of three self-contained ground floor accommodation units, located within a few minute's walk from the hospital. These apartments are funded entirely through the generosity of those who support out fundraising activities.

In 2020, we helped over 40 families in their time of need from all over Ireland and overseas. However, when COVID-19 struck, we could no longer facilitate this service. Instead, we offered the apartments as a respite for HSE frontline ICU and CCU staff.



Sharon's story: Croí Apartments

Two years ago, when Sharon was just 40, a cardiac stress test showed she had a heart condition so serious her doctor said she shouldn't even go home. She was told to go straight to Galway University Hospital for further tests and evaluation.

In Galway, it was discovered that Sharon needed an immediate intervention to insert a cardiac stent to prevent a heart attack. She was kept in hospital for monitoring.

Sharon was terribly frightened and anxious. She needed her family, especially her husband Noel, to be with her. But they lived five hours away in Donegal. The idea of staying in an expensive Galway hotel indefinitely with the whole family just added unnecessary stress.

When one of Sharon's nurses saw how distressed Noel was to go back to Donegal so far away, she called Croí. The nurse knew that, thanks to you, we provide over 100 families a year a place to stay in Galway at the Courtyard Apartments at Croí House, where they can be close to loved ones during cardiac treatments.

This made all the difference. Noel could be with Sharon all day long, and return to a private apartment to shower, sleep and recover. And he was able to bring Caitlín, Sharon's oldest daughter, with him from Donegal.



Caitlín said, "That meant so much to me. I was unsettled at home in Donegal, with Mum in the hospital. I felt much better in Galway with her."

Sharon's fears were relieved with Noel and her daughter nearby.

Sharon's dad was so grateful for what Croí did for his daughter and her family, he wanted to do his part. He held an epic fundraiser for Croí, driving his 1961 Vintage Tractor from Mizen Head to Malin Head to raise €12,000 to help prevent heart disease!

Tragically, not long after his amazing effort, Sharon's dad had a heart attack himself and passed away — despite having no prior symptoms. The impact of heart disease on a single family like Sharon's shows just how common it is in Ireland, and how critical Croí's mission is.

Thank you for supporting Croí and our family support services.



National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health

The National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health (NIPC) was established by Croí, and has a strategic partnership with the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). The NIPC aims to position Ireland as an international leader in cardiovascular health.

This past year saw a real shift to digital delivery and engagement, increasing our professional and academic membership. The NIPC continued to develop and deliver the MSc in Preventive Cardiology and the PgCert in Health Promotion. NIPC also delivered a range of training and education programmes, including Masterclasses and conferences for health care professionals.

Education and Training

The NIPC aims to produce a new generation of scholars and leaders in cardiovascular health and disease prevention. The Masters in Preventive Cardiology is the only one of its kind in Ireland and is delivered in a unique community partnership with Croí and NUI Galway.

In 2019/20, 10 students graduated from the NIPC Masters programmes, including the MSc Preventive Cardiology and the new MSc Diabetes programme, part of the suite of Masters in Preventive Medicine and Cardiovascular Health.

Conferences

NIPC conferences went virtual for 2020, with the highest attendance to date - 660 attendees at our annual West of Ireland Diabetes Integrated Care Conference and over 620 attendees at our 7th Annual National Prevention Conference.

Short Courses

In 2020 the NIPC delivered CPD training and education programmes to hundreds of healthcare professionals across ECG workshops, Masterclasses, Cardiology Study Days and Cardiac Rehabilitation courses. Highlights include:

- Cardiovascular Disease in the Third Age Masterclass held in Westport, Mayo in February with 155 registrations.
- The first NIPC Series was presented in July with 405 registrants.
- Developed and delivered 3 courses on 'Delivering Evidence-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation', with 61 cardiac rehabilitation practitioners completing the course.
- Delivered 2 Advanced Cardiology Study days with 50 registrants.
- Delivered 7 blended-learning ECG workshops, with 171 participants in total.

Working with students

Croí and the NIPC were delighted to support students virtually from across Ireland and internationally in 2020. Last year we hosted 16 students from across universities, schools and programmes including: NUI Galway, University of Limerick, University College Cork, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Brunel University in London, Transition Year students, BACPR and GRETB placements. Student programmes included: MA in Health Promotion, MSc in Preventive Cardiology, BSc Physiotherapy; Public Health and Nutrition; and more.

Centre for Lifesaving Training

315 participants were trained in Heartsaver AED, Cardiac First Responder and Basic Life Support training.

Research

Our research is focussed on cardiovascular disease prevention and aims to reduce cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, improve quality of life, and increase life expectancy. Our observational studies evaluate the quality of secondary and primary prevention of cardiovascular disease across Ireland, Europe and Internationally. Our interventional studies, evaluate innovative models of preventive care targeted at high-risk patients. Our aim is to ensure that NIPC is an attractive and dynamic

partner for research in all aspects of preventive cardiology and is producing and disseminating new knowledge nationally and internationally, which contributes to the health of individuals and communities.

INTERASPIRE

INTERASPIRE aims to describe the management of cardiovascular risk factors and current use of cardioprotective medications among coronary patients in relation to international and national guidelines and standards on the prevention of cardiovascular disease. During 2020 we continued to work with 18 National Societies of Cardiology on this study across six WHO regions. With the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020 we took the opportunity to measure COVID-19 antibodies on all patients and so we will be able to describe the effect of COVID-19 on prognosis. The research will continue into 2021 and will be completed in 2022.

2020 Publications

Professors Bill McEvoy and David Wood, together with other NIPC affiliates, achieved 41 publications in peer reviewed journals throughout 2020.

Awards and Recognition



Two In A Row: NIPC Wins Research Paper Of The Year!

The National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health (NIPC), based in the Croí Centre, Galway, won the Research Paper of the Year Award at the 2020 Irish Healthcare Awards for the second year in a row!

NIPC, which was founded by Croí, was awarded the winning research paper for their JAMA-published medical paper challenging recent guidelines defining high blood pressure. The NIPC / NUI Galway investigation, led by Prof J William McEvoy, Medical and Research Director of the NIPC, called into question the validity of recent changes to treatment recommendations for a certain type of blood pressure patient, highlighting that up to 150,000 Irish patients may not need this additional treatment.

Announced on December 1, the Irish Healthcare Awards recognise innovation and excellence in the Irish healthcare sector and are Ireland's leading Awards, now in their 19th year. Speaking about the awards, Neil Johnson, NIPC & Croí CEO, said: "We are delighted to win this award for the second year in a row! It's great recognition for Irish cardiovascular disease prevention and the important work being undertaken at NIPC and NUI Galway."

This award adds to NIPC's winning streak at the Irish Healthcare Awards – in 2019, Croí and NIPC scooped three top awards. Learn more about the work at the National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health by visiting www.nipc.ie.

NIPC Fellowship Programme

The NIPC has launched a Fellowship Programme. This is a recognition programme to award excellence in preventive cardiovascular healthcare practice and also to recognise exceptional contributions to the work of NIPC.

Prof Ger Flaherty is leading this initiative and the Committee has awarded 4 honorary Inaugural Fellowships to Prof Ian Graham, Prof Emer Shelley, Prof Lis Neubeck and Prof David Wood. In addition, after reviewing all Fellowship applications a further 6 Fellowships and 3 Associate Fellowships were also awarded, including:

Associate Fellows:

- Dr Abdelsalam Ben Saoud
- Claire Duffy
- Chee Hwui Liew

Fellows:

- Denise Dunne
- Dr Yvonne Finn
- Prof Gerard Flaherty
- Prof Catriona Jennings
- Dr Liam Martin
- Tara Conboy

HPN Top 100 Healthcare Professionals

Croí is delighted to announce that Irene Gibson, Director of Programmes at Croí, was listed in the Hospital Professional News (HPN) top 100 Healthcare Professionals. Irene is a strong advocate for the nurses role in cardiovascular disease prevention and at Croí, Irene had a diverse portfolio of CVD health initiatives, ranging from public awareness campaigns to prevention, rehabilitation and patient support programmes. Examples include the award winning CLANN programme and the MySláinte programme.



Irene Gibson,
Director of Programmes at Croí

We are also delighted to announce that Professor Bill McEvoy, Medical and Research Director of the National Institute of Preventative Cardiology (NIPC) was listed in the top 100 Healthcare Professionals.



Prof J William McEvoy,
Medical and Research Director of the NIPC

Croí Board Member, Professor Faisal Sharif, Professor of Translational Cardiovascular Medicine and Innovation, has also been listed in the top 100. Congratulations to you all.



Patient Community

Croí is a founding member of the Global Heart Hub, the first global non-profit organisation established to provide a voice for those affected by cardiovascular disease. Global Heart Hub is an alliance of heart patient organisations, aiming to create a unified global voice for those living with or affected by heart disease.

Throughout 2020, Croí took part in several Global Heart Hub campaigns, including Heart Valve Disease Awareness Week and Heart Failure Awareness Month.

Heart Valve Disease Awareness Week

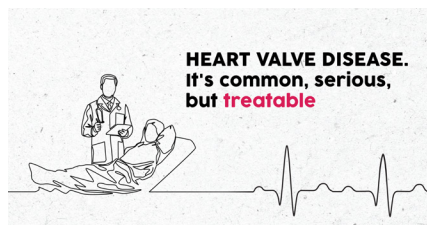
The European Heart Health Survey, an international survey of people over 60 years across 11 European countries, has found very low awareness in Ireland of heart valve disease and of certain symptoms requiring medical attention. Heart valve disease is largely a condition of ageing and, when it comes to a simple stethoscope check that can diagnose it, one in five respondents say that they either never have a stethoscope check or only have one when they ask their GP for it.

Croí called for the Government to offer everyone over 55 years a free annual cardiac check to ensure early diagnosis of a range of cardiovascular diseases. The call came as International Heart Valve Disease Awareness Week got

underway from September 14-20, 2020. The week was an initiative of the Global Heart Hub, and was led in Ireland by Croí.

Heart valve disease is where one or more of the valves in the heart is diseased or damaged, giving rise to a narrowing of the valve (stenosis) or causing leakage (regurgitation), meaning the heart can't pump blood effectively.

For too many people, symptoms are either not recognised or ignored and this can have fatal consequences. People perhaps recognise more overt symptoms such as chest pain and irregular heartbeat, but more understated symptoms such as breathlessness and tiredness, can be important red flags as well.



Estimates suggest that 13% of people over 75 years will experience heart valve disease. There are over 2.7 million people across Europe age 65 and over thought to have heart valve disease with this figure set to rise to 20 million Europeans within the next two decades due to changing age demographics.

Heart Valve Disease Awareness Week Ireland

September 14 - 20, 2020



Created over 5 million opportunities to see awareness week messages across national Irish print, online, radio, and social media coverage

Social media posts by 20+ influencers, follower total of 1,526,900+ users

#ListenToYourHeart



Q+A Session
With Dr. Darren Mylotte, Consultant Cardiologist



Developed video series with patients and clinicians



Press pick-up across 60 outlets including national coverage on RTE Radio 1, in the Irish Examiner, Irish Times and Irish Independent.

Cherish life.

Croí Heart & Stroke Charity, Croí House, Moyola Lane, Newcastle, Galway
info@croi.ie | www.croi.ie



Heart Failure Awareness Week

Croí led a Heart Failure Awareness Campaign in Ireland, from October 12 - 26. The campaign shared stories from people living with heart failure to help raise awareness.

Heart failure is a serious chronic condition where the heart cannot pump enough blood to support the needs of other organs in the body. The most common causes of heart failure include coronary heart disease, myocardial infarction (heart attack), congenital heart defects, or damaged heart valves. Symptoms include breathlessness, fatigue and swollen limbs. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people are at risk of heart failure and it is the most frequent cause of hospitalisation in people over the age of 65.

Learn more: croi.ie/heartfailure2020



Global Heart Failure Awareness Week

October 12 – 26, 2020



Our heart failure campaign video was viewed over 230,000 times!



Developed video series on people living with heart failure



Living with
Heart Failure
is challenging

Financials

Croí's total income for 2020 was €2m, of which €990,000 was achieved through fundraising, donations and sponsorships. In addition, €757,000 was received through grant support from the HSE and Pobal in support of health programme such as CLANN, MySláinte and the Mayo Third Age project. Furthermore, Croí received COVID-19 government supports in the amount of €300,000 across the wage subsidy scheme and stability funding.

We expended 77% of our income on the direct delivery of a diverse range of health programmes, specifically designed in response to the needs of our local and regional population and detailed throughout this report. The remaining 23% of our expenditure was expended on the costs associated with running the Croí Heart & Stroke Centre, the provision of patient & carer support accommodation at the Croí Courtyard Apartments and the overall costs of organisational management, governance, revenue generation and depreciation.

We take very seriously our obligation to ensure that all income is used effectively and efficiently in support

of our mission and goals. We are governed by a Board of voluntary non-executive Directors who do not receive any remuneration or compensation. We adhere to the highest standards of governance and accountability having adopted the Code of Governance for Charities and the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising.

Each year, our organisation undergoes an independent audit and we file accounts with the Companies Registration Office. We are also registered with the Irish Charities Regulator.

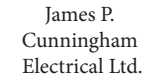
This year, our multidisciplinary team worked across the areas of Nursing, Physiotherapy, Exercise & Fitness, Dietetics & Nutrition, Diagnostics, Education & Training, Research, Fundraising and Programme Administration. Each year, our staff engage with hundreds of stakeholders, from Courtyard Apartment visitors to healthcare professionals, collaborative partners, policy makers, patients, carers and volunteers.

We are here to serve our community.

Our work would not be possible without the tireless support of so many. You – our volunteers; donors; fundraisers; corporate, community and media supporters; and our partners – help us make a real difference and literally save lives. Our ability to innovate and to save lives depends on the generous financial support and goodwill you afford us. We are deeply grateful for this and we do not take it for granted.



Major Partners and Supporters





Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke



Croí Heart & Stroke Centre,
Moyola Lane, Newcastle, Galway, H91 FF68



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@CroíHeartStroke