

Pulse

June 2021

SPECIAL
75th
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

Looking back to
the beginning, to
1946

How
long COVID
changed my life

Top tips for a
**healthier
summer**

Can an
eye test
detect heart
disease?



Chest
Heart &
Stroke

75
YEARS
ON YOUR SIDE



NORTHERN IRELAND CHEST HEART & STROKE BY YOUR SIDE SINCE 1946

1946 was a very big year for Northern Ireland; legendary footballer George Best was born, local artist John Luke completed the infamous Northern Rhythm, and Nutts Corner replaced Belfast Harbour as the principal civil airport. But, as well as significant progress in sport, art and aeronautics, 1946 saw a huge step forward for public health.

In June of 1946, 16 visionary volunteers set up the first NI branch of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, an organisation that still thrives today, albeit under a new name and with a more varied purpose – it is, of course, Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke.

By 1946, the second world war had ended but the repercussions of six years at battle still rippled through the farthest corners of Northern Ireland. At the beginning of the war, rationing in NI was more relaxed than neighbouring England and conscription was voluntary, but the relative comfort did not last. Northern Ireland's industrial contribution to the war effort, including aircraft, ships and linen, made it a target. The Belfast Blitz of 1941 devastated the city. Over 100,000 people were left homeless and deprivation, particularly in the cities, was rife.

In the countryside, families supplemented rations with homegrown vegetables but, in the city centres, poor nutrition, inadequate cramped housing and poverty, exacerbated by returning servicemen, waged a third war – this time on health.

The new enemy, an airborne bacterial infection, Tuberculosis (TB), was actually anything but new, having existed in Ireland since the 1600s. But, with the poverty of post-war, the infection rate was on the rise and Northern Ireland was suffering from the highest death toll from TB of anywhere in the UK.

Northern Ireland was in crisis.

Recognising the devastating effects of this pandemic, the 16 volunteers called a meeting on Friday 14 June 1946, in a borrowed room on William Street South in Belfast. Their mission was to educate people about TB, disseminate information about the disease and care for those suffering.

Today, the core values instilled by these volunteers remain unchanged; those of compassion, courage, consideration and commitment. The charity won the war against TB and adapted and evolved, changing its focus to concentrate on all diseases of the chest and heart in 1959, and further expanding to include stroke in 1976.

In 2020/21, we have continued to support the front line in the face of adversity and, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, have committed to change, learn and grow. All our care rehabilitation programmes, support groups, and even our respiratory-support choir, normally all delivered face-to-face, have been adapted to a virtual, socially distanced platform (Zoom).

Through lockdown we have continued to disseminate advice on healthy living and preventing disease: we have successfully hosted webinars on sleep, stress and diet, delivered health checks to the general public, and offered a wellbeing programme to local businesses and their staff, all online. Plus, ensuring no-one was left behind, we introduced Blood Pressure and Atrial Fibrillation testing units into homeless hostels, combined with online training for the hostel staff.

Always mindful that not all our clients are in a position to embrace new technologies and recognising that many of them have been shielding during the pandemic, we have kept in touch with posted monthly newsletters and a system of support telephone calls (32,100 calls made to date).

What's more, we have created a one-of-a-kind COVID recovery service, actively caring and supporting sufferers of long COVID.

It has, no doubt, been a challenging 15 months but, as always, we have adapted to face your most immediate needs and to be exactly where you need us, when you need us, to support you and your family through your most difficult time.

Today, as we celebrate 75 years of NICHHS, we look back to the beginning and thank the original 16 volunteers:

Mr Bradley McCall (chair), Dr H Aiken, Dr B R Clarke, Mr Davidson, Councillor C G Hall, Dr H P Hall, Miss J Heslip (later Mrs Middleton), Mr D Lyttle, Mr B McGuigan, Mr A Millar, Mrs J Oliver, Mr J Parry, Mr D Ross, Mr W Scott, Miss D Todd and Dr N Whyte.



TIMELINE 1946 - 2021

05



1946

NICHS was founded as the Northern Ireland Branch of the National Association for Prevention of Tuberculosis on Friday 14 June.

1947

Established an Advice Bureau to give support to TB patients.

1951

Organised handicrafts as therapy for patients in the TB sanatoria.

1969

Established a scholarship scheme for specialised training for nurses.

1965

Posted first appeal letters to large industrial firms and banks in NI – £210 received from six companies (almost £4,000 in today's money).

1959

Changed name to The Northern Ireland Chest and Heart Association.

1958

Gave out first research grant – £35 to Dr Knox for equipment to use in research into Chronic Bronchitis.

1957

Distributed 10,000 anti-smoking blotters to schools in Belfast.

1955

Started working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tuberculosis Authority on aftercare for people leaving sanatoria.

1973

Set up the First Stroke Club, in East Belfast.



1976

Changed name to The Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke Association.

1984

Became the first ever Charity of the Year for Belfast City Marathon.



1985

Purchased the charity headquarters on Dublin Road, Belfast.

1987

Established the first Cardiac Support Group.

1997

Established the Young Stroke Scheme.



2010

Developed the Post-Rehab Exercise Programme (PREP) for stroke survivors alongside the Southern Trust.

2007

Delivered the first "Taking Control" Self-Management Programme.



2004

Began to work with schools with Chester's Playground Games.



2002

Developed the Health and Homeless Programme alongside the Simon Community.

2001

Set up the first Carers' Support Group.

1998

Developed the first Highway to Health, in Strabane.



2015

Gave the largest research grant to Prof Tara Young for her "Eye to the Window". Value Cabs donated £125k towards the research.



2017

Significantly expanded the Respiratory and Cardiac Care Services.



2018

Chris Henry (Ulster & Irish Rugby Legend) raised £150k for NICHS in his testimonial year to support a 3-year PHD developing a programme to increase physical activity in primary school children.

2020

During the COVID-19 pandemic, modified Care Services, Health Checks and seminars to online delivery. Delivered PPE to local hospitals to support the fight against the pandemic.



2021

Lobbied for NI ban on smoking in private vehicles carrying children.

Chest Heart & Stroke
75 YEARS
ON YOUR SIDE

Phillip McGhee

LONG COVID & ASTHMA



To quote Mary Poppins, my whole experience has been supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!”

When Philip fell ill with COVID-19 in December he thought it would be something that he could manage himself. He quickly realised that he needed additional support.

Working in physio and occupational therapy, Phillip was used to guiding others through their recovery, but the tables had turned;

‘Suddenly I was the patient and I found that very hard to accept. When the doctor referred me to NICHHS, I thought – is he seriously sending me there, that’s for old people!’

‘But, after just two sessions, I realised how wrong I was! Sharing stories with other people going through similar bad health - the interaction was unbelievable. I realised that the course was for everybody, not just old people, not just stroke

patients, everyone – especially if you’re struggling with your mental health.’

Phillip has suffered with asthma for the last 27 years and has damaged lungs from working in bakeries. He has always managed his health well but COVID struck him hard;

‘The first two weeks I was bedridden. I could barely talk, barely breathe. I had flu-like symptoms; joint pain and aches all over. And I had a metal, chemical taste in my mouth which lasted for weeks.’

‘After about 5 weeks, I started to attempt to go for walks. At the start, the stairs were an absolute nightmare. Even now, five months down the line, I still get so fatigued. I used to walk for miles with my wife Anne, four or five times a week - my

asthma never slowed me down! But now, after 20 minutes, my breathing is heavy.’

‘I always felt that I was a motivated person but COVID almost broke me completely. You give yourself a hard time and you are so angry at the injustice! But, after a few sessions with NICHHS, I had started walking again, I had an action plan, I had goals.’

It’s been a slow recovery, but Phillip is starting to notice small improvements;

‘My MRI came back and showed that there is no permanent lung scarring. I am feeling a lot better,

What is Long COVID?

Post COVID syndrome, also known as long COVID, occurs when signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19, continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis.

Sufferers report a wide range of problems beyond the three NHS-approved symptoms (persistent cough, fever and loss of taste or smell).

Long COVID symptoms can include:

- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Breathlessness
- Ongoing cough
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss

If you, or someone you love, is experiencing long COVID symptoms, book an appointment with your GP or contact NICHHS at www.nichs.org.uk/our-support-services/getsupport

I still have sad days but now I think to the future. I hope to start swimming and to get back to work again. In twelve months’ time, I would love to be where I was.’

‘Because of the NICHHS, I was saved. It was a bright light in what was a darkened room for me. There has been a lot of tears, but I’ve come out the other end, I’m one of the lucky ones, I get to talk about it.’

Survivor Story

John Sheriff HEART ATTACK

“The NICHS course was AS important as heart surgery for my return to normal life.”



John Sheriff was the fittest person he knew. He was the fittest person anyone knew. Until he wasn't.

Only 56 years old, John from Banbridge, suffered a serious heart attack last October and, ever since, has been on an emotional journey of recovery, showing remarkable resilience.

‘My heart attack was totally out of the blue. I, like so many other victims, just assumed it was a bad case of wind.’

‘But, after severe bouts of chest and back pain over 3 days, I realised something was seriously wrong. In the hospital they confirmed that I had suffered a series of large heart attacks. I was fitted with stents and a ICD [implantable cardioverter-defibrillator].’

Heart surgery saved John's life but, coming home, he was thrown into emotional turmoil;

‘I sank into deep depression. Before the attacks, I would run/ walk 90km per week plus two sessions of weights and cardio in the gym daily. I played football and cricket. I rarely drank and have never smoked. Where did I go wrong?’

John was a Close Protection Officer in Afghanistan but was unable to return to service;

‘I felt useless. My head was in a mess. I was once shot through the neck in Afghanistan and was back at work the next day. I really thought that I was indestructible.’

John was referred to NICHS's online Taking Control programme;

‘From the start, I felt more at-ease than I had in quite some time. The NICHS team showed such empathy. They encouraged us to talk about our problems and to share our experiences - I found great comfort knowing I wasn't the only one in a dark place.’

‘Each week we would set a weekly Action Plan, it was a great motivator and gave me direction. It ensures that I stay focused without pushing myself to exhaustion.’

Seven months later, John manages a little more each day and enjoys outdoor walks with his wife Jacqueline;

‘Taking Control gave me the confidence to get my life back on track.’

For more information on heart health and NICHS Cardiac services, visit www.nichs.org.uk/ heart or email healthpromotion@nichs.org.uk.

DID YOU KNOW?

HEART ATTACK can strike anyone, at any time. If you spot signs of a heart attack, STOP and call 999.

- S** – Something's not right – symptoms can start slowly.
- T** – Tightness or pain in the chest, pain in the arm, neck or jaw.
- O** – Other symptoms such as shortness of breath, nausea or sweating.
- P** – Phone 999 immediately.

NICHS Supporters

KEEP A MEMORY ALIVE



NICHS has always been a charity close to the McFaul family's heart. After losing grandparents to fatal heart attacks and COPD, the family then lost daughter Clare last year, aged just 32.

Clare suffered from an AVM haemorrhage in her spine as a young teen. Tragically another haemorrhage took her life 21 years later.

Clare's parents, Roy and Anne Marie, her sisters and her wider circle of friends and family dug deep to support the charity. They asked for donations in lieu of funeral flowers, Clare's sister organised a Facebook birthday fundraiser, and friends undertook a gym challenge and mountain climb. The result - £3500!

‘Clare was a determined young woman, who was always laughing and went out of her way to help everyone.’

Funds raised in Clare's honour will contribute towards rebuilding countless lives across Northern Ireland.

To speak to a member of our team about supporting us in memory of a loved one, contact fundraising@nichs.org.uk

CHALLENGE 335 A LOCAL BUSINESS WITH A BIG HEART

The staff at Fitzwilliam Hotel recently picked NICHS as their charity of choice and, since the pandemic, has made enormous efforts to fundraise from home with a walking challenge.

The team signed up to Challenge 335, a new multi-option fundraising campaign, to help support the 335,000 local people currently living with a chest, heart or stroke conditions.

Having almost reached their milestone of £1,000, the proactive team is already looking ahead to the next challenge.

Fundraising efforts like these not only help fund vital care but can also demonstrate your company's commitment to the local community.

Interested in finding out more about Corporate Fundraising Challenges? Visit www.nichs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/fundraise-at-work



Exercise

- 1** The long, light summer days make getting out for a walk a little easier. Try for a 30-minute brisk walk at least 5 days a week.
- 2** Alternatively, try for 75 minutes of high intensity exercise per week like running, cycling, or a team sport.
- 3** Muscle strengthening exercise is recommended twice a week; lifting weights, carrying heavy shopping bags, yoga and Pilates all count!
- 4** Or start with 10-minute segments. Housework, washing the car or even cutting the grass are all exercise, as long as they increase your heart rate.

Physical activity lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, improves your mood, strengthens muscles and bones and promotes better sleep.

Healthy Eating

- 5** If porridge is something you associate with winter, think again! Baked porridge bars, eaten hot or cold, are a great summer alternative (recipe at www.nichs.org.uk).
- 6** Aim for at least 2 portions of fruit and 3 portions of vegetables per day. Try snacking on:
 - Seasonal raspberries and strawberries
 - Carrot and cucumber sticks with hummus
 - Sliced apple with a little peanut butter



20 TOP TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER SUMMER

- 7** Salads for lunch or dinner can increase your veg intake - load up with tomatoes, peppers and beetroot. Pulses and lentils make a meat free alternative, rich in protein and high in fibre.
- 8** Avocados, oily fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds are all high in Omega 3. In moderation, they can increase good cholesterol and lower bad cholesterol.
- 9** Natural/ Greek yoghurt makes a healthy snack. Add fruit for sweetness or some nuts and seeds for a good cholesterol boost!
- 10** Avoid adding salt to food. High levels of salt in your diet can increase your risk of high blood pressure. Aim for no more 1 teaspoon a day.



- 11** Summer BBQs are hard to resist but burgers and sausages are high in saturated fat. As a healthier option, barbecue vegetables with a baked potato and serve with salad.



- 12** Sauce (red or brown) is high in salt and sugar, so only use small amounts. Why not add pepper, herbs or spices instead?
- 13** Did you know that we should aim to drink 2 litres of water every day? Add mint or cucumber for extra flavour and carry a refillable bottle.

Stress

- 14** Stress can affect us all but breathing techniques and mindfulness can help. For stress management techniques and free videos visit www.nichs.org.uk/information/risk-factors/stress
- 15** With lockdown easing, it's only natural to feel worried about change. Make sure to talk to family and friends, exercise regularly and try out NICHs's stress support.

If you are experiencing high levels of stress, and it is affecting your quality of life, book an appointment with your GP.

Sleep

- 18** With sunset late in the evening, it can be more difficult to sleep well. Make sure your room is dark, avoid watching TV an hour before bed and turn on your phone's blue light filter.
- 19** For better sleep, avoid high sugar food before bed, reduce your alcohol intake and try not to exceed 3 cups of tea or coffee per day.

Adults should aim for 7-9 hours' sleep each night.

Smoking

- 20** If you currently smoke, consider quitting. Ask your GP or local pharmacy for advice on gum, patches and sprays or visit www.stopsmokingni.info for more information.

Alcohol

- 16** In the summer sun, it's easy to drink one too many but it's important to stick to the alcohol guidelines. The NHS recommends no more than 14 units per week.
- 17** Try for several alcohol free days each week.

Alcohol is high in calories and can increase your risk of high blood pressure and high cholesterol, particularly if you regularly drink above the guidelines.



NICHS Support

Give a Regular Donation, Make a Lasting Impact

335,171 people in Northern Ireland are living with chest, heart and stroke conditions today – that's 1 in 5 of us!

Despite that, almost 90% of NICHS's care services and research are funded exclusively by public donations. We rely on you, and so do the survivors we care for.

'When I had my stroke, NICHS visited me in the hospital. They were there for me from the beginning, before I even knew how much I would need them. Their care programmes helped me regain my mobility but, most importantly, they gave me back the confidence and strength to push forward when everything seemed so dark. No doubt, they saved my life.'

Now I give £10 a month. It's not much – the price of a couple of coffees! - but I know that it helps. I wouldn't want anyone, in my position, to be without them" **Barbara from Ballynahinch**



Setting up a regular donation by direct debit allows us, as a charity, to plan for the future and to expand our services to meet your needs.

£5 per month = £75 per year
= Funds 2 home visits by a Stroke Family Support Coordinator

£15 per month = £225 per year
= Pays for 2 health checks with a Health Promotion Officer

£20 per month = £300 per year
= Puts 1 participant through our 6-week Covid-19 Recovery Service

£50 per month = £750 per year
= Supports 25 individuals living with heart disease

*Figures include Gift Aid

Setting up a direct debit is simple!

1. Complete a direct debit form online at www.nichs.org.uk/make-a-donation then select 'regular gift' OR request a form and prepaid return envelope. Contact us on 028 90 266 6743 or supportercare@nichs.org.uk.
2. Choose how much you would like to give and for how long (you can cancel at any time!). Remember, any amount, big or small, makes a difference.
3. Donations can be made monthly, quarterly or annually – you decide.
4. If at any time you need a break, we will put your donation on hold until you're ready to start again.

NICHS Lobbying

TOBACCO KILLS LET'S NIP IT IN THE BUTT

Over the last 75 years, NICHS has consistently lobbied decision makers within the healthcare system and government to make changes to laws and policies that will help prevent chest, heart and stroke illnesses. One of our chief concerns today is the dangerous impact that tobacco and smoking is having on the health of the local community.

Facts about tobacco:

1. Smoking is the single greatest cause of preventable illness and premature death in Northern Ireland, killing round 2,300 people each year.
2. It is also one of the primary causes of health inequality; the prevalence of smoking is significantly higher among people living in areas of social and economic deprivation.

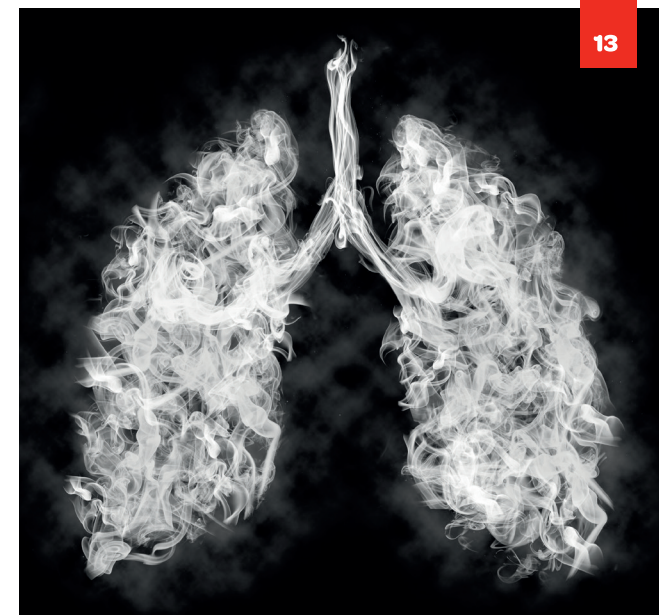
With these facts in mind, discouraging smoking, particularly in young people, is **never** off the NICHS agenda.

In addition to the work we do in schools, and with our health checks, we also consistently encourage the government to do everything it can to help people quit and to stop people from becoming addicted in the first instance.

Tobacco Retailers Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

NICHS was heavily involved in lobbying in support of the Tobacco Retailers Act 2014.

Under this legislation, anyone running a tobacco business in Northern Ireland must register with the Tobacco Register NI. The legislation is enforced by local councils and Tobacco Control Officers carry out regular checks on all businesses to check their compliance with the legislation. If retailers are found to be in breach of laws governing the sale of tobacco –



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i.e. selling to children - they can now be subject to a Restricted Premises or Sale Order.

This can be issued against any person or business that commits three tobacco-related offences in any five-year period.

NICHS successfully lobbied to toughen this provision and to increase the penalties involved.

This Order will prevent the sale of tobacco, either on a premises or by individual, or both, for between 28 days and 3 years, depending on the length of time granted.

Thankfully the numbers of young people smoking in Northern Ireland is falling quite steeply. NICHS will remain at the fore of those pushing for government to do more to protect them.

In 2016, NICHS influenced the NI Executive to pass an Act banning smoking in cars carrying children. Sadly due to political instability in recent years the ban is not yet in force. We are continuing to press the Health Minister to bring the ban into effect.



Joe Brittain
STROKE

Joe Brittain was redecorating his new bungalow in Bangor three years ago when he started to feel dizzy. What seemed like a touch of vertigo turned out to be a life-altering stroke;

‘You see the typical FAST symptoms on TV, but none of that happened to me. I had just finished painting and bent down to pick something up. When I stood up again, I felt wobbly and started being sick. The doctor thought it was a bad case of vertigo but as time went on, I realised it was more serious. I phoned an ambulance and as they loaded me in, I took a small stroke. I woke up the next morning in hospital and my whole right side was numb.’

Joe, only 57 at the time, found himself critically ill; ‘The CT scan revealed that the clot was very close to my brain stem. I was rushed to the

Royal Victoria Hospital. The consultant told my wife that if we didn’t do anything, I would die, and if we did, there was still a chance that I could die anyway. He gave me clot-busting drugs [Thrombolysis]. For 48 hours it was touch and go, but luckily I came out of it on the right side.’

Three years on, Joe’s biggest concern is the burden he has put on his wife;

‘She is my main carer. I can dress and wash myself, but my wife has all the meals to cook and all the DIY jobs around the house – she’s had to learn all sorts of things that I used to do. It is very hard for her.’

‘My right side is still weak, and I can’t walk far. But, the specialists in the hospitals said I wouldn’t walk again, so I guess I’m doing alright that way!’

Learning to use your left hand when you were predominantly right-handed is difficult - I feel like I take my life in my hands every day when I shave!’

Determined to regain as much independence as possible, Joe’s biggest aim has been to relearn to drive;

‘I had to go through the DVLA to get a different license and then to Disability Action. They took me out in a specially adapted car. Everything can be done with my left foot. The car also has a steering ball with about ten different functions – indicators, lights, wipers, horn - you just work it with your thumb. It takes a wee while to get used to, but you can do it and it gives you that independence to go out yourself.’

“

My advice? Don’t be afraid of failure. Keep trying the things that you’re afraid to do.”

‘Now we drive down to our caravan in Millisle and to Belfast – everything we did before. There’s nothing impossible about driving again and the team at Disability Action will move heaven and earth to try and get you back on the road.’

As well as relearning to drive, Joe has attended his local NICHs Young Stroke Group since 2018 and completed the charity’s Taking Control self-management programme;

‘It has been a godsend. I absolutely love it. The comradeship is brilliant. We have a WhatsApp group and there’s not a day goes by that you don’t laugh at something someone has sent. We’ve learned so much about each other and are now so close.’

One piece of advice that Joe would give to anyone who’s just had a stroke...

‘Don’t be afraid of failure. Try things that you think you would like to do but are afraid to do. The thing is, if you have a go and fail, that’s fine. The next time you do it you’ll probably fail again, but you’ll get further along the second time. So, in a sense, you’ve failed better.’

For more information on NICHs Stroke Services, visit www.nichs.org.uk/our-support-services/stroke

Sharon Cummings

LONG COVID



NORTHERN IRELAND CHEST HEART AND STROKE WAS THE ONLY PLACE I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SUPPORT AND IT'S REALLY BEEN WONDERFUL."

A school Vice-Principal, a decorated ParkRunner and a mother of 2, 51-year-old Sharon from Groomsport was busy, healthy and happy. She could never have anticipated being struck down by a long-term respiratory illness.

Sharon had been feeling unwell for a few days when she tested positive for COVID-19 back on 6 September 2019. Initially bedridden by the illness, her condition (long COVID) is still ongoing 8 months later and has prevented her from getting back to life as normal:

'There are waves of seeing some hope at the end of the tunnel and then, there are weeks like this one that are not great at all, to be honest.'

Sharon's symptoms include severe fatigue, breathlessness, an ongoing cough and vertigo.

In January/ February this year, Sharon took part in NICHS's 6-week COVID Recovery Programme. The service was in its infancy at the time but has proven to have had strong results for patients with long COVID symptoms. Sharon describes herself as very fortunate to have accessed this support, when she felt like there was nowhere else to turn:

'The programme was marvellous. It puts you in touch with other people in a similar position. On a day to day basis, you don't really meet many people with COVID, especially with everyone being in their homes at the moment, it's not possible to have those conversations. When you're connecting with other people and hearing their stories, it puts everything into perspective and helps you realise that you're not alone.'

'Really the programme is all about self-managing your condition. We spent time looking at physical health and sleeping; very practical ideas with regard to recovery. Also, there's the constant message that what you're feeling and what you're experiencing in this situation is normal and that's very reassuring.'

'In between sessions, the NICHS girls would follow up with a phone call, just to see how I was doing, to see how my action plan and weekly target were coming along. It was so supportive, especially emotionally, and so lovely to hear the phone ring.'

'The programme connects the physical to the emotional, it offers a much more holistic approach and encourages you to care for your mental health too.'

Sharon's journey back to strength is an ongoing battle but step by step, she has regained some fitness and even took part in NICHS's fundraising Red Dress Run back in February:

'I spent 22 days in bed! So, initially it was a very slow 5-minute walk for a week, then gradually I got to 10 minutes and so forth. I am normally a regular ParkRunner - every Saturday morning - so when I saw the Red Dress Run advertised, I just thought, 'Look, it's time to give a little back'.'

Dealing with the mental strains of lockdown and her ongoing ill-health has taken its toll, but Sharon attributes physical exercise and getting outdoors as key factors in her recovery;

'Physical activity is so important mentally. Connecting with nature has become more significant; paying attention to your surroundings, listening to the birds, spotting a bright yellow flower on a really dismal day, waving at someone across the road, a quick hello. It's about the walk or the run but actually, at the minute, it's about so much more - it's the whole experience of getting out, getting fresh air and properly connecting.'

Inspired by Sharon's perseverance? Find out more ways to get out and keep active at www.nichs.org.uk/information/risk-factors/physical-inactivity

NICHS Research

“Research is to see what everyone else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.”

Albert Szent-Györgyi de Nagyrápolt, Hungarian biochemist and Nobel Prize winner

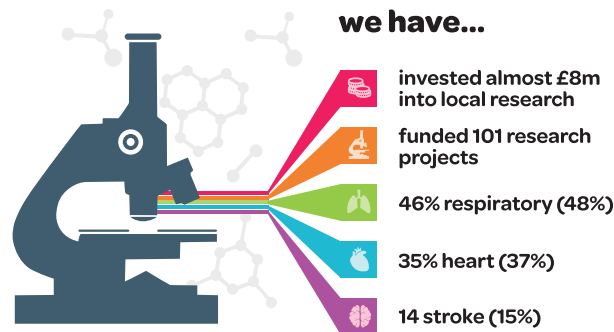
Investing in high-quality, ground-breaking research forms one of the core pillars of NICHS. Since our first grant in 1958 (£35 to Dr Knox to research Chronic Bronchitis), we have devoted ourselves to funding treatments, medications, therapies, rehabilitation programmes and cures. Why? Because every piece of research rebuilds, betters or saves a life.

The research we fund is incredibly diverse and includes;

- Developing a programme to increase physical activity in children
- Exploring new asthma medications
- A study incentivising pregnant women to quit smoking
- Plans to improve psychological wellbeing among stroke survivors
- Preventing ventilator-assisted pneumonia
- And, faster and simpler ways to test for and predict stroke and heart failure

To mention but a few...

Since 1994 we have...



One of our most substantial ongoing research projects an impressive study exploring whether the blood vessels in the eye can be used to detect heart disease.

An Eye for a Window £250,000. 2015 – 2021.

Professor Tara Moore from University of Ulster, with a team of professors and cardiologists, has fronted this project since it was first funded by NICHS in 2015.

Professor Moore claims that the eye is a natural window to the heart;

‘Generally, it’s only possible to detect heart conditions through high tech scans or invasive tests, all of which involve specialist NHS clinicians and associated costs.’

‘This simple eye test offers direct and inexpensive observations of small blood vessels in the eye. We will have the ability to assess cardiac health, based on the condition of these vessels.’

The team has finalised the technology for the project and are in the testing stage. Ultimately, the aim is for their smartphone-based eye test to be used widely across NI opticians,



with ambitions to develop an ‘at home test’.

Moore explains, ‘Adding our screening to a regular eye test will enable the individual to assess and adapt their lifestyle to strengthen their heart health.’

She adds, ‘It is important to make this technology available to all; regardless of socio-economic status, location or age.’

Find out more about NICHS research projects, past and present, at www.nichs.org.uk/research

With thanks to Value Cabs, who generously donated £125,000 to this research.

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke

Your legacy of hope and care - a gift in your Will.

A gift in your Will could not only help your loved ones but can leave a legacy of hope for generations to come.

In Northern Ireland four in ten adult deaths are caused by chest, heart and stroke illnesses. We’re working hard to change this by funding life-changing research and caring for those who are affected by devastating health conditions every day.

We’ve been helping local people for 75 years, and with your help we can continue to be there for people who need us now, as well as those who will need us in the future.

Please visit nichs.org.uk/giftsinwills for further information on leaving a gift in your Will to NICHS or call us on 028 9032 0184.



**Preventing, Supporting,
Caring and Rebuilding
across Northern Ireland.**

**Chest
Heart &
Stroke**

Almost 90%


of NICHHS's care services and research are funded exclusively by public donations.

**Find out how you can support NICHHS
at www.nichs.org.uk**



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