

A 'one-stop' health surveillance clinic for children with Down Syndrome

Down syndrome (or Trisomy 21) is the most common chromosomal abnormality, making up 8% of all such cases registered Europe-wide. In Ireland, one baby in 444 has Down syndrome: about 110 babies each year. Management of this condition has improved over the decades, thanks partly to healthcare programmes designed to improve life expectancy and quality of life for people with Down syndrome.

Researchers at Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Tallaght University Hospital and Trinity College Dublin's Department of Paediatrics established a unique health-check clinic for children with Down syndrome. We realised that many services for Mid-Leinster patients were provided by non-statutory bodies. This is because, traditionally, care came from religious and charitable organisations dedicated to a single type of disability. This made access to, and coordination of, services variable and complicated.

We aimed high: for 100% of children with Down syndrome at CHI Tallaght to receive care in accordance with Irish and UK guidelines. We started twice-monthly 'one-

"Our project provides a framework which would be potentially emulated and used in other medical conditions."

Professor Eleanor Molloy

Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health

stop' multidisciplinary clinics catering for 270 children with Down syndrome. These clinics offered care by a clinical nurse specialist and same-day audiology and phlebotomy appointments. We found that compliance with guidelines improved with each clinic. Health promotion strategies, such as providing

information on immunisations, also became more effective. Parents reported 100% satisfaction, and we now plan to expand the clinic to include nutrition and dietetics, play therapy and interdisciplinary services such as cardiology, respiratory and mental health.

Nicola Hart from Down Syndrome Ireland explained: *"This and other research coming from the clinic is very welcome. It will help to inform best practice not just for those attending, but for children who have Down syndrome in other parts of Ireland and around the world."*

