

COVID IMPACT SURVEY FOR COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDERS

There's been a great response from over 340 community first responders around the country to NUI Galway's Covid impact research survey, with many positive comments that underscore the importance and value of Community First Response schemes, as well as insights on the support required by these schemes following the pandemic, according to project team leaders Dr Eithne Heffernan and Dr Siobhán Masterson.

In March 2020, the National Ambulance Service (NAS) stood down all affiliated Community First Responder (CFR) Groups. It was a tough but necessary decision in light of the public health emergency and the infection and transmission risks for CFRs and their families.

During that year, through consultation and collaboration with CFRs and as the vaccination roll-out started, the NAS devised a plan for the safe conduct of CFR activity, and the re-introduction of CFR Groups began in December 2020.

The United Nations has reported that the Covid-19 pandemic caused a "global surge in volunteering". People who would never have considered volunteering before the pandemic became involved in activities to support their neighbours and communities.

Many CFRs found new ways to volunteer, including supporting screening and vaccination activities. For some people, the pandemic forced them to cease volunteering due to the impact of Covid-19 on themselves or their families.

For others, the lull in their usual activity caused by the pandemic led them to reassess their volunteering contribution, and, while some people saw the value of community first response more than ever, other volunteers made the decision to cease their involvement.

CFR PRIORITIES SURVEYED

Almost one year on from the first CFR Group reactivation, the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway has conducted a survey with CFRs, to gain insight into the reasons that prompted CFRs to either re-join or leave their CFR Group following the reactivation process.



There's been a great response from over 340 community first responders around the country to NUI Galway's Covid impact research survey.



NAS Community Engagement Officers distributed a link to all CFR Group co-ordinators who invited group members to complete the survey. Community first responders are pictured here with HSE West Community Engagement Officer Mark Callanan during an ACLS workshop at 'RESPOND 2018' conference and exhibition, organised by CFR Ireland.

Topics covered in the survey included whether or not the volunteer's CFR Group is operational at present; the volunteer's personal CFR status (i.e. active, no longer active, unsure); the reasons for continuing or stopping volunteering; and the reasons that would encourage a volunteer to return to CFR activity. The survey also included questions on how long the volunteer has been a CFR, their role within their CFR group, and their main occupation or role outside of CFR activity.

The survey is part of a larger NUI Galway research project entitled 'Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest and Community First Response in Ireland: Building Evidence for Policy and Practice', which aims to develop priorities for the data collection and analysis needed to inform Irish community first response to out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

The research is primarily funded by the Health Research Board and co-funded by the National Ambulance Service and Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO CARDIAC ARREST
The project team has already investigated how community first response

to cardiac arrest works internationally and has published studies with international colleagues.¹²³ The team has consulted CFRs, patient representatives and the emergency medical services on what data should be collected about community response and how such data should be collected.⁴

They also investigated if there is any difference in the socio-economic status of those areas that were and were not covered by CFR Groups. The findings from both these pieces of work are currently being considered for publication in scientific journals.

The team is also working with colleagues from the National Ambulance Service to implement data collection and integrate data reporting into the annual National Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCAR) report.

As well as the current survey, the

team is reviewing the international literature to investigate the factors that motivate people to become first responders to medical emergencies.⁵

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The link to join the current survey was distributed by the NAS Community Engagement Officers to all CFR Group co-ordinators who, in turn, invited group members – past and present – to complete the survey.

The link was also distributed by CFR Ireland to their membership mailing list. Hundreds of CFR volunteers have responded to the survey, with a good mix of people who are currently active as CFRs, waiting for their CFR Group to reactivate, or who have decided not to return to CFR activity.

Additionally, while a 'tick box' list of possible answers was provided for each question, in true CFR style many

CFR Ireland

www.cfr.ie The National First Responder Network

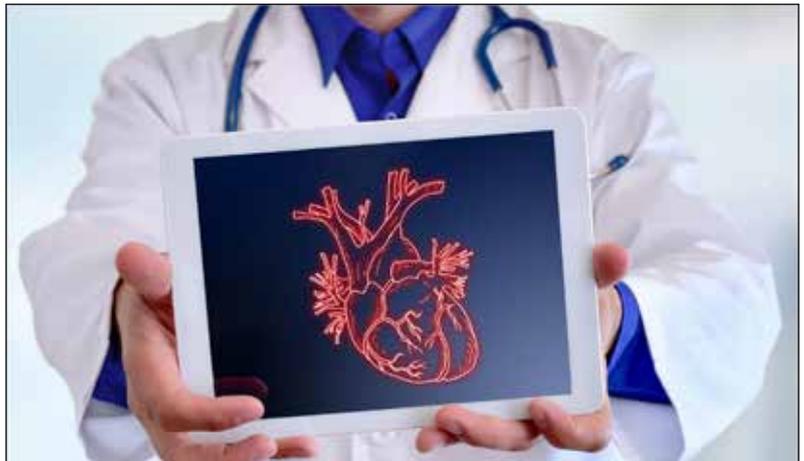
The research team looks forward to completing the analysis of the survey responses and plans to present the results to the CFR community at RESPOND 2022 on Saturday 26 March 2022, which returns to the Mullingar Park Hotel, Co. Westmeath.



The survey to gather the views of CFR volunteers about the impact of Covid-19 on CFR groups and schemes and the reactivation of CFR groups and schemes during the pandemic has been undertaken by a team of researchers from NUI Galway.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

***Dr Eithne Heffernan** is a Postdoctoral Researcher at NUI Galway. She recently collaborated with the National Ambulance Service to evaluate their response to the pandemic and to develop recommendations for the collection of data relating to out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and Community First Response. Eithne previously worked as a Research Fellow in the University of Nottingham in the UK, where she also obtained her PhD. Her research in Nottingham primarily focused on the measurement of social isolation in individuals with hearing loss. Prior to this position, she was employed as a Senior Psychometrician in the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry in the UK.



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***Dr Siobhán Masterson**

is National Ambulance Service Lead for Clinical Strategy & Evaluation, and an Honorary Research Senior Lecturer with the National University of Ireland, Galway. She is a member of the Study Management Team for the European Registry of Cardiac Arrest (EuReCa), a project of the European Resuscitation Council. Siobhan has recently been appointed as a member of the Basic Life Support Task Force for the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR).



volunteers have gone that extra mile with written additional detail about their motivation to re-join or leave their CFR Group.

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References:

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