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Trinity has received world's largest autism grant

20 June 2018 | News

The â?¬115 million grant, titled Autism Innovative Medicine Studies-2-Trials (AIMS-2-Trials), will increase our understanding of autism and help develop new therapies to improve health outcomes and quality of life for autistic people



The largest research grant ever given for neurodevelopmental conditions has been awarded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative to an international consortium academically led by the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London. Trinity College Dublin forms part of the research consortium which includes 48 universities and research institutions, industry partners and autism charities.

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AIMS-2-Trials brings together autistic people and their families, academic institutions, charities and pharmaceutical companies to study autism and provide an infrastructure for developing and testing new therapies. In line with the autism community's priorities, the consortium will also focus on why some autistic people develop additional health problems that severely impact both quality and length of life.

All autistic people are different which makes identifying and testing new therapies challenging. AIMS-2-Trials will take a precision medicine approach aimed at tailoring therapies to a person's biological profiles. Achieving this will require developing tests that can predict how a person's autism may progress throughout development and their likelihood of developing additional mental health problems.

AIMS-2-Trials will create the first European clinical trials network for autism, as well as allowing for international collaborations with charities, government agencies and industry to rapidly determine if therapies are effective. Partnership with autistic people, their families and carers will be a crucial part of developing therapies that achieve the outcomes which matter most to autistic people.

Researchers at Trinity College Dublin will contribute to the advancement of personalised approaches to therapies for Autism Spectrum Disorder. This project builds on our ongoing research investigating rare genetic changes that are associated with autism symptoms. In AIMS-2- Trials, Trinity researchers will focus on investigating individuals who carry deletions in genes specifically related to the structure and function of brain synapses (or brain cells).

They aim to find biomarkers that can help identify specific biological pathways involved in brain development. The researchers will be engaging in a pan-European clinical trials network to investigate new therapies specifically targeting disabling symptoms and improving quality of life while also retaining unique autistic strengths.

Through the Innovative Medicines Initiative, European Union funding matches in-kind contributions from autism charities and the pharmaceutical industry, with nearly €60 million provided by charities, and €2.5 million from the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).