

**Health, Democracy and the  
Globalised Pharmaceutical Industry:  
Exploring the Politics of Drug Regulation  
Internationally and in Ireland**

University College Cork, Ireland  
16 – 17 September 2004

*The conference organisers wish to acknowledge the financial support of the  
Faculty of Arts, University College Cork.*

## Conference Aims

This conference aims to consider the implications of the mounting economic, political and cultural influence of the globalised pharmaceutical industry for health and democracy. Key questions that will be addressed include –

- ❖ What are the implications of capitalist globalisation for the power of the globalised pharmaceutical industry?
- ❖ What are the implications for health of the rise internationally of pharmacocentric healthcare, as both the prevention and cure of illness are seen more and more to lie in drug therapy?
- ❖ What are the consequences of the rise of pharmacocentric healthcare for health inequalities nationally and globally?
- ❖ Does the globalised pharmaceutical industry have growing influence in policy-making at national and supra-national levels, and if so, how and what are the implications of this for health and democracy?
- ❖ What are the implications of the construction of drug regulation as a purely technical process, based on ‘scientific’ evidence and in which the globalised pharmaceutical industry is seen to play a benign role?
- ❖ What are the ramifications of the pressure from the globalised pharmaceutical industry for greater ‘deregulation’ of its activities?
- ❖ In drug policy decision-making, how are health and commercial objectives balanced?
- ❖ How can the drug policy-making domain be democratised and made more transparent?
- ❖ How can greater participation of patient and consumer movements, as well as the wider public, in drug regulation policy be promoted?
- ❖ How can sociological analyses contribute to the answering of the above questions?

The first day of the conference will explore these questions within the international context, while the second day will consider them specifically in relation to Ireland. Little discussion of these issues has taken place in Ireland, in spite of the intense dependency of the Irish economy on the globalised pharmaceutical industry. Further aims of the conference are, therefore, (1) to bring together Irish people with an interest in drug policy to nurture greater public debate about the influence of the globalised pharmaceutical industry, and (2) to explore ways in which a greater understanding of the specificities of the influence of the industry in Ireland can be developed.

## Programme

### Thursday, 16 September The Politics of Drug Regulation Internationally

8.30 Conference registration

9.15 – 11.00

#### Understanding Drug Regulation and the Power of the Globalised Pharmaceutical Industry – Critical Sociological Perspectives

**Orla O'Donovan, University College Cork**

Introduction and opening comments

**Denis O'Hearn, Queen's University Belfast**

Globalisation and transnational corporate interests: Implications for the pharmaceutical industry and localities

**John Abraham, University of Sussex**

Sociology of bias and science in knowledge production: Implications for the politics of drug regulation

11.30 – 1.00

#### The State, Democracy and Drug Regulation

**Joel Lexchin, York University, Toronto**

The state, neo-liberalism and drug regulation – reflections from Canada

**Charles Medawar, Social Audit and Andrew Herxheimer, UK Cochrane Centre**

What does the controversy over Seroxat tell us about the politics of drug regulation in Britain?

2.30 – 4.30

#### The Globalised Pharmaceutical Industry: An Obstacle to Global Democracy?

**Ellen 't Hoen, Medecines sans Frontieres**

Trade rules and access to medicines: What to watch out for in bilateral and regional trade agreements

**Ger Downes, University of Limerick**

The pharmaceutical industry and the World Trade Organisation's TRIPs Agreement: The role of intellectual property in global public health policy and its implications for global governance

**Christiane Fischer, BUKO Pharma-Kampagne**

NGO and civil society struggles to democratise supranational agencies that shape drug regulation policy

**Friday, 17 September**  
**The Politics of Drug Regulation in Ireland**

9.00 – 11.00

**The Pharmaceutical Industry and Drug Consumption in Ireland**

**Kathy Glavanis-Grantham, University College Cork**

The globalised pharmaceutical industry in Ireland and the Cork Region: A political economy perspective

**Michael Barry, National Centre of Pharmacoeconomics**

Drug expenditure and consumption in Ireland – Explaining recent trends

**Terry Lynch, General Practitioner**

The dominance of drug-based approaches to mental health in Ireland – A critical commentary

11.30 – 1.00

**The Globalised Pharmaceutical Industry,  
the State and the Medical Profession in Ireland**

**Orla O'Donovan, University College Cork**

A pathological partnership? The Irish state and the globalised pharmaceutical industry

**Colin Bradley, University College Cork**

The relationship between the medical profession and the globalised pharmaceutical industry in Ireland: Some personal observations

2.30 – 4.30

**Democratising Drug Regulation in Ireland-  
The Place of Patient Organisations and Lay Expertise**

**Josephine Mahony, Paula Kealy and Detta Warnock, Positive Action**

The power of bloody women – A history of Positive Action

**Sheila O'Connor, Patient Focus**

Patient Focus – Breaking the silence about medical abuse in Ireland

**Kathy Glavanis-Grantham, University College Cork**

Concluding comments

## Speakers

**John Abraham** is professor of sociology and co-director of the Centre for Research in Health and Medicine, in the University of Sussex. His books include *Science, Politics and the Pharmaceutical Industry* (1995); *The Therapeutic Nightmare: The battle over the world's most controversial sleeping pill* (1999); *Regulating Medicines in Europe* (2000); and *Regulation of the Pharmaceutical Industry* (2003).

**Michael Barry** is the Director of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics, St. James's Hospital Dublin.

**Colin Bradley** is professor of general practice at University College Cork. He has a long-standing research interest in the prescribing of general practitioners. His MD was based on a qualitative study of the decision making of GPs with regard to prescribing. He has also conducted research on the introduction of new drugs into general and specialist practice and on the communication between doctors and their patients about medicines. He is a member of a large European research group investigating the users' perspectives on psychotropic medicines.

**Ger Downes** is a Government of Ireland postgraduate scholar at the University of Limerick where he is researching a PhD on the WTO's TRIPs Agreement and its implications for global governance.

**Christiane Fischer** works for BUKO Pharma-Kampagne, a campaign group committed to Rational Drug Therapy and involved in monitoring German pharmaceutical industry. BUKO was founded in 1977 by independent Third World solidarity groups to improve communication on the grassroots level and to strengthen the political influence of the movement. The aim of BUKO is to expose structural injustice between North and South and to press for changes towards a fair new economic and political world order. BUKO has about 200 member groups. She is a member of Health Action International (Europe).

**Kathy Glavanis-Grantham** lectures in the Department of Sociology, University College Cork, and teaches in the areas of development, gender and health. Together with Orla O'Donovan, she recently embarked on a major study of patient organisations in Ireland and the extent to which they challenge capitalist biomedical discourses and practices. She is a member of Health Action International (Europe).

**Andrew Herxheimer** is a clinical pharmacologist who taught at London University, founded and edited *Drug & Therapeutics Bulletin* for many years, and now works in the Cochrane Collaboration and on DIPEX, a database of patients' experiences of illness ([www.dipex.org](http://www.dipex.org)). He is a member of Health Action International (Europe).

**Paula Kealy** is a founding member of Positive Action and is currently a member of its Executive Committee. Positive Action was formed by women who received Anti-D immunoglobulin which was infected with Hepatitis C. This is widely regarded as the biggest public health scandal in the history of the Irish state. Positive Action provides support, information and advice for infected women and their families.

**Joel Lexchin** received his MD from the University of Toronto in 1977. He currently teaches health policy at York University in Toronto and works as an emergency department physician. He has been talking about pharmaceutical policy issues for over 20 years and has authored or coauthored over 50 peer-reviewed publications on all aspects of this topic. He is a member of Health Action International (Europe).

**Terry Lynch** is a general practitioner and psychotherapist based in Limerick and is the author of the best-selling *Beyond Prozac: Healing Mental Suffering Without Drugs*. In 2003, he was appointed to the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy that was established by the Irish government.

**Josephine Mahony** is a founding member and the current Chairperson of Positive Action.

**Charles Medawar** is executive director of Social Audit, and a critical commentator on medicines policy, drug safety and corporate, governmental and professional accountability. Together with Anita Hardon,

he recently published the book *Medicines Out of Control? Antidepressants and the Conspiracy of Goodwill*. He is the current chairperson of the association board of Health Action International (Europe).

**Sheila O'Connor** is one of the founding members of Patient Focus, a national patient advocacy group in Ireland. Personal experience as well as degrees in Sociology and Law from University College Dublin formed this interest.

**Orla O'Donovan** works in the Department of Applied Social Studies in University College Cork, where her research and teaching are centrally concerned with democracy and the politics of healthcare. Together with Kathy Glavanis-Grantham, she recently embarked on a major study of patient organisations in Ireland and the extent to which they challenge capitalist biomedical discourses and practices. She is a member of Health Action International (Europe).

**Denis O'Hearn** is professor of sociology at Queens University Belfast and for many years was Chair of the West Belfast Economic Forum. His recent book, *The Atlantic Economy: Britain, the US and Ireland*, won the American Sociological Association's PEWS outstanding book award in 2002.

**Ellen 't Hoen** works on the Access to Essential Medicines Campaign of Medecines sans Frontieres. She has been involved in extensive research and advocacy on patent barriers to access to medicines. She is a lawyer and drug policy expert.

**Detta Warnock** is a member of the Executive Committee of Postive Action.

## Conference Booking

For further information, contact the conference organisers at:

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To book a place at the conference, please complete the form below and return it to one of the conference organisers by **29<sup>th</sup> of July 2004**, either by post or email. The conference registration fee, which covers attendance at the conference, dinner on the evening of the first day, and lunch and teas/coffees on both days, is €100 (concession for unwaged). The conference fee will be paid in full at registration.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

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