



RESEARCH

UCC and EU to collaborate on thyroid study



From left to right: Dr Patricia Kearney, **UCC**; Prof Nicolas Rodondi, University of Bern; Prof Jacobijn Gussekloo, Leiden University Medical Centre; Prof David Stott, University of Glasgow; and Prof Rudi Westendorp, Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing

By Aoife Connors
aoife.connors@imt.ie

Researchers from five European universities are to collaborate on a €6 million EU-funded (FP7) research project investigating current treatment practices for people who suffer from an underactive thyroid gland.

The study, entitled 'Thyroid Hormone Replacement for Subclinical Hypo-Thyroidism Trial' (TRUST), involves an Irish element that will be lead by **Dr Patricia Kearney** at the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, **UCC**.

A mildly underactive thyroid, known as subclinical hypothyroidism (SCH), affects about one in six people over the age of 65 and has been linked to heart attacks and strokes in later life. The thyroid gland controls how quickly the body uses energy and produces proteins and how sensitive it is to various hormones.

TRUST researchers will

observe 3,000 older subjects over a five-year period to better understand how to treat people who suffer from subclinical hypothyroidism. Half of the subjects will be treated with a hormone replacement drug, thyroxine, and the remaining will be given a placebo.

Academics from **UCC** will collaborate with experts in ageing, thyroid problems and vascular disease from around Europe, including researchers from Leiden University Medical Centre and Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing, Netherlands, and the University of Bern, Switzerland.

Speaking about the research project, which will involve teams in Scotland, the Netherlands, Ireland and Switzerland, Dr Kearney said: "The project has the potential to significantly improve the health and well-being of older people with subclinical hypothyroidism, resolving uncertainties about how best to manage this common condition."