



THE IRISH ACADEMY OF
ENGINEERING
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE

ACADEMY NEWS –22nd April 2026 – Engineering safe and fast to market medical devices event

Engineers Ireland West Region and Biomedical Division, supported by the Western Region of the Irish Academy of Engineering held a joint event, *Engineering Safe and Fast to Market Medical Devices: Growing the Galway Medical Devices Industry Cluster*, on Wednesday, 22nd April at the Dexcom Stadium in Galway.



Tom Leahy FIAE, Special Advisor, Director and past President of the Irish Academy of Engineering travelled from Dublin. The local Western Region, chaired by Padraic O'Donoghue, was well represented, including by MC and Speaker John O'Dea, Maurice Buckley (organiser), Peter McHugh, and Jim Browne.

Background

Galway is home to 8 of the world's top 10 MedTech companies, including Medtronic, Boston Scientific and Abbott. These multinational giants alongside an array of MedTech start-ups employ 15,000 people in Galway alone. This is a significant increase from earlier estimates of around 8,000–12,500, suggesting strong growth through the early 2020s.

The West of Ireland now accounts for 39% of the regional distribution of medical device employees in Ireland.

Ireland as a whole is the second-largest European exporter of medical devices, producing 80% of the world's supply of stents and 50% of the world's supply of ventilators, and exporting more than €13 billion worth of products annually to over 100 countries.

Discussion

The event took the form of a panel discussion interacting with an audience of engineers working in Medical Device companies and representatives of Biomedical Engineering at UG and ATU.

The panel members:

- John O’Dea, CEO of Palliare, former President of Engineers Ireland, and FIAE
- Evelyn Birmingham, Director of Engineering at Medtronic
- Aisling Owens, Certification and Inspection Officer, NSAI
- Adrian Mahon, Certification and Inspection Officer, NSAI

Covered a wide range of topics and were overall very optimistic about the future of Galway as a cluster or hub for Medical Device investment. In particular, very helpful advice was given on moving from a large company into doing a startup, including

- Bioinnovate programme(Y1)
- Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund (Y2-3)
- Horizon Grants) if product is highly novel)
- DTOF Funding (If highly novel)
- Your clinical key opinion leader (KOL) will be extremely important
- West benefits from both Enterprise Ireland and Western Development Commission funding

Guidance was given to the engineering audience on the long journey and steps involved:

- It can take 8-10 years
- Important to start down the right road – to be clinically needs driven
- Execute your Quality System from day 1 – build documentary evidence
- Understand what clinical evidence you will need to produce
- Understand who pays for your product – Reimbursement – Often this falls to Insurance companies
- Understand the regulatory requirements and pathways to market.



The event was followed by a guided tour of the new Connacht Rugby High-Performance Centre by Denis Buckley (Maurice's son), who has had a remarkable playing career with Connacht. The facilities included team changing rooms, Gym, CCTV coaching rooms, a huge ice bath and an impressive full size indoor artificial grass pitch. Denis reflected that the lads coming through at Connacht have no idea what the facilities used to be when compared to the new facilities.