

#SundayWiMIN24 Week 2: Dr Illona Duffy

Dr Illona Duffy is a GP in Monaghan and the National Director of CME with the ICGP.

"I graduated from RCSI in 1993. Having initially started in Architecture I left after a year to re-sit my Leaving Certificate in the Institute of Education, Leeson Street, having realised that following my GP father's footsteps was what I wanted. This was a difficult year as my younger 15-year-old sister developed Leukaemia and died within months and this likely cemented my decision to aim for a career in medicine.

Having graduated from RCSI and interned in Beaumont Hospital, I then commenced the NorthEast GP training scheme and following graduation returned to Monaghan to join my father's GP practice.

Our practice has grown from a single GP in 1965 to a 4 GP partner, 2 part-time associate and GP trainee practice caring for over 11,000 patients in Monaghan.

Following my return to Monaghan town in 1998 I became CME tutor for Cavan and Monaghan and continue to organise CME small group meetings in both counties. Being part of the national CME tutor network has played a vital role in my professional and personal development.

I was a member of the IMO GP committee for 15 years, including roles as vice-chair of the committee, Treasurer and member of the under-6s GMS contract negotiating team.

I became Medical Director of NEDOC, the GP out of hours service for the Northeast region, in 2016 and helped guide the service through the difficult Covid years ensuring that not only were patients protected but also the GPs who continued to care for patients at night and weekends despite working long hours in their daytime practices. I remain on the negotiating team as we seek to improve the service and protect our GP members from increasing demands to provide routine medical care in what was created as an emergency GP bridging service.

I became National Director of CME in 2022 and working with the ICGP aim to develop and expand the network of CME tutors who provide local small group meetings on a monthly basis. Our goal is to ensure that all GPs will have access to a CME Group where educational, practical and collegial support is provided. The CME programme plays a huge role in GP retention and GP integration especially in rural areas and for those working in single or small GP practices.

I remain passionate about General Practice and believe that we must fight to protect the magic of this speciality. The privilege of being part of a patient's life journey is unique for GPs- sharing the excitement of a positive pregnancy test, seeing a patient recover from depression, easing the intolerable itch of scabies, watching children patients grow into adulthood and ultimately parenthood themselves, and finally helping in a patient's final journey to death- this is what makes General Practice the job I still love and the career I hope will be as rewarding for young doctors into the future.

Finally, I am mother to 4 fantastic children, wife to a husband who has filled the gaps created in family life by my work and provider to 2 dogs, a cat and rabbit. I am also a baker, obsessive photograph taker of everyone around me and member of gang of 7 amazing women who graduated with me from RCSI and who have provided support and friendship for decades. I love prosecco, chocolate, reading, escapes to the wilds of Mayo and reading the stories of the many inspirational women who have proceeded me in nominations on this wonderful WiMIN group."