



Watts Medal and poster competition winners 2006

Students who were awarded a HRB Summer Student Scholarship in 2005 presented their findings in January 2006. The winner of the Watts Medal Competition was Michael Blake, School of Pharmacy, UCC who investigated the way drugs are delivered to treat chronic pain in patients suffering from leg ulcers. The aim of his study was to improve delivery and help reduce pain. Michael wanted to find out what level of pain relief was achieved through the release of morphine in a gel, how well the morphine was distributed through the gel and how quickly it was released to reduce pain. He found that, even though morphine was mixed with the gel manually, all samples tested met a uniform standard. He then built a model to measure how fast the morphine was absorbed to relieve pain. He discovered that the initial release was rapid, resolving the immediate pain. As the morphine gel is only applied every 2-3 days and the results indicate that a high percentage of the morphine is delivered within the first few hours, this means that the pain gets progressively worse between treatments. The next step is to work out how to administer the same dose so that it can last for a sustained period of time.

The winners of the HRB Summer Student Poster Competition were:

First prize: Steven Penny (Effect of plasma treatment on cellular response). This project was carried out in the Conway Institute, UCD, under the supervision of Dr William Gallagher.

Second prize: Dervla Connoughton (The role of angiogenin in motor neuron degeneration). This project was conducted in the RCSI under the supervision of Dr Dairin Kieran.

Third prize: Maureen Clarke (Removing patients from a GPs list: Patient and doctor perspectives). This project was carried out in the Department of General Practice in RCSI with Dr David Whitford.