

MOVING TOWARDS NEW TREATMENTS FOR MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

Understanding how genes are linked with degenerative brain and nerve diseases could lead to better management and treatment. That's why studies at Beaumont Hospital and Trinity College Dublin are analysing genetic information from patients with the motor neurone disease Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and also from 'controls' who don't have the condition.

Participants give a blood sample, allowing the researchers to build up a DNA bank, and they are currently screening around 1,000 genes of interest.

Meanwhile, work on family histories of patients, also being carried out at Beaumont, is helping to build a more complete picture of neurodegeneration in the Irish population.

"The idea is to understand mechanisms and to try and identify new therapeutic options," says Beaumont Hospital consultant neurologist and clinician-scientist Prof Orla Hardiman.

"The research draws on a national register of patients with ALS around Ireland, which is maintained by the Irish MND Research Group. Its information provides a valuable resource for studying the processes that underly the disease," says Prof Hardiman.

"We have a very good population-based cohort and there are few countries that can say that."

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