

## Press Release

16 March 2015

### Taoiseach Enda Kenny to announce collaboration between Cork's APC Microbiome Institute and Johnson & Johnson Innovation

- A unique partnership to explore the use of viruses in the gut as potential therapeutics

The Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Mr. Enda Kenny will formally announce an exciting new research alliance between Janssen Biotech Inc., (Janssen), one of the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, and the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre's Microbiome Institute of Cork, Ireland, while visiting Washington, DC during the St Patrick's Day Celebrations. This new research alliance, facilitated by Johnson & Johnson Innovation, London, will explore the role of viruses in shaping the human microbiome and their potential use as novel treatments and/or biomarkers of inflammatory bowel disease.

At the Science Foundation Ireland research celebrations in Washington DC, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny, in announcing the new research collaboration, said "this collaboration between the APC Microbiome Institute and Janssen in this important area of emerging science will facilitate Irish research outputs reaching a global market place and deliver innovative health products that will improve patients' lives".

The APC is located at University College Cork and Teagasc, Moorepark and has over 170 scientists and clinicians working on the human microbiome, the vast collection of microbes living in and on the human body. The microbiome plays an important role in the health of the human host and microbiome research is recognised as one of the hottest areas in biological research. The APC Microbiome Institute, which was formed over a decade ago, is supported by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and by funding from national and global partner companies in the food and medical areas. APC Microbiome Institute researchers and Janssen immunology scientists will work together to explore how viruses control the composition of the microbiome and impact health and disease.

The project will be led at the APC Microbiome Institute by the APC Director Professor Fergus Shanahan and Project Leader Professor Colin Hill. Colin Hill stated "*We are very excited at the opportunity to explore the role of these microbial viruses with Janssen. While most people are familiar with human viruses, it is not as well known that bacteria also have viruses which can drastically influence bacterial populations. These bacterial viruses are necessary for a balanced ecosystem, which is vital for the overall health of the host*". He added "*Janssen are the perfect partners for this endeavour as they combine a strong interest in the fundamental science through the Immunology Therapeutic Area along with a track record of bringing innovative new medicines to the market*".

Fergus Shanahan added "*There is no other partnership quite like this in the area of gut viruses; working with the Janssen scientists is a perfect fit for the APC and a logical extension for our science which will deliver not only new treatments but new diagnostic approaches to intestinal diseases*"

According to Scott Plevy, MD, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Leader, Immunology Therapeutic Area, Janssen Research & Development, LLC, *“This collaboration with the APC Microbiome Institute represents an important endeavour for Janssen. The role of phage in shaping the microbiota in health and disease is relatively unexplored and we have an opportunity to collaborate with leading scientists in the field to characterize novel biology and develop new diagnostic and therapeutic modalities for inflammatory bowel disease.”*

Prof. Mark Ferguson, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government of Ireland said *“The APC Microbiome Institute’s application of novel science highlights how SFI is delivering on our strategy of investing in research centres of scale and excellence in strategic areas where Ireland can compete internationally. We are delighted to be partnering with Janssen to advance the first class work being undertaken at this SFI Research Centre.”*

## **ENDS**

For further information contact Professor Colin Hill, Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, Mobile +353 87- 6858567, Professor Fergus Shanahan, Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, Mobile +353 86 2804881 or Dr Sally Cudmore, Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre, Mobile +353 87- 2895646 or Dr Catherine Buckley, Communications & Outreach Manager, Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre +353 21 4903362; mobile +353 86 8554744.

## **About APC**

The APC Microbiome Institute (<http://apc.ucc.ie>) is the Irish research institute for diet, medicine and the microbiome, funded by Science Foundation Ireland and industry partners. The APC, a partnership between University College Cork, Teagasc, the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority, and the Cork Institute of Technology, carries out research on gastrointestinal bacterial community (the microbiome). The microbiome is not only a target for treatment and prevention of disease, it is a repository for functional food ingredients, new drugs and biomarkers of disease. Over the past decade APC scientists have related food and microbial diversity with health, have discovered new anti-microbials and anti-inflammatories and developed templates for future foods. Pharmabiotic is a neologism devised by the APC to represent any material (including molecules and microbes) originating from the gut ecosystem that can be exploited for a health benefit, and includes probiotics, prebiotics, metabolites, and potential new anti-microbials and anti-inflammatories.