

## Discount on annual College subscription

The College has decided to apply a 7.5% discount to its annual subscription fee for 2012. This discount will apply only to members on full subscription who pay online by March 1 or return their completed direct debit mandate to the College by the same date. For instructions on how to avail of this discount, please see [www.icgp.ie/fees](http://www.icgp.ie/fees) or contact Annette Elebert in the College at Email: [annette.elebert@icgp.ie](mailto:annette.elebert@icgp.ie)



### News in brief

- To further assist you in fulfilling your professional competence requirements, the ICGP has an online audit presentation and has developed a number of sample 'off the shelf' audits – the current samples include warfarin, COPD and benzodiazepine prescribing. See [www.icgp.ie/audit](http://www.icgp.ie/audit)
- The closing date for abstract submissions to the ICGP Research and Audit Conference is Friday, April 20. The abstracts are not to exceed 300 words, including the abstract title, all authors – with the attending author underlined – and contact details for correspondence. Please also state whether the submission is for oral or poster presentation and submit to Claire Collins at Email: [claire.collins@icgp.ie](mailto:claire.collins@icgp.ie) For more information see [www.icgp.ie](http://www.icgp.ie)
- A masterclass in contraception for tutors is to be held in the Radisson Hotel, Galway in conjunction with the ICGP AGM on May 11. The course is open to those who wish to become contraception tutors for the purpose of assessing and certifying candidates for the Contraception Certificate. In order to apply, you must hold a family planning certificate or equivalent qualification. Cost of the course is €150 for a full-day course for those new to contraception training and €75 for a half-day for established GP trainers or family planning instructors. To register, please contact Kirstin Smith at Email: [kirstin.smith@icgp.ie](mailto:kirstin.smith@icgp.ie)
- There are still places available on the Certificate in Contraception practical course on March 8-9. For information and to book a place, visit [www.icgp.ie](http://www.icgp.ie)

## Campaign makes measuring tapes available in surgeries

Safefood's new two-year public health campaign 'Stop the Spread' aims to raise awareness among the adult population that excess weight has become the norm rather than the exception.

To assist your patients, Safefood is making free measuring tapes available in more than 1,300 surgeries around the country. These will have been made available in January and should be displayed until the end of February. The campaign advertising on radio and outdoor posters will encourage the general public who wish to measure their waist to pick up their free tape at their local GP surgery.

Supported by TV, radio and outdoor advertising as well as online at



[www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu), 'Stop the Spread' aims to encourage adults to become more aware of their waist size, find out if they are carrying excess weight around their middle, increase awareness of the health problems associated with excess weight and motivate adults to start the process of losing weight in a healthy, sustained way.

For more information on the campaign or to request additional materials, please contact safefood at [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu) or on its helpline 1850 40 45 67.

## GP study finds parents to be poor judges of their children's weight

Parents are slow to recognise that their children might be overweight or obese, according to a new study by Irish GPs.

A semi-rural group general practice (four GPs) collected data from 101 parents and their children attending the practice. Calculation of the children's BMI for age indicated that 14.9% of the children were overweight or obese. In addition, 51.6% of the parents were also overweight or obese. Nearly 12% of the children surveyed were actually underweight.

The researchers found that parents were poor at recognising their children's increased weight. Nine of the overweight children were perceived as being of 'normal' weight by their parents, and none of the obese children had their correct weight category identified.

The GPs who carried out the research reported that more than half of the children watched one to two hours of TV on an average school day, with 26.7% watching TV for two to three hours or more.

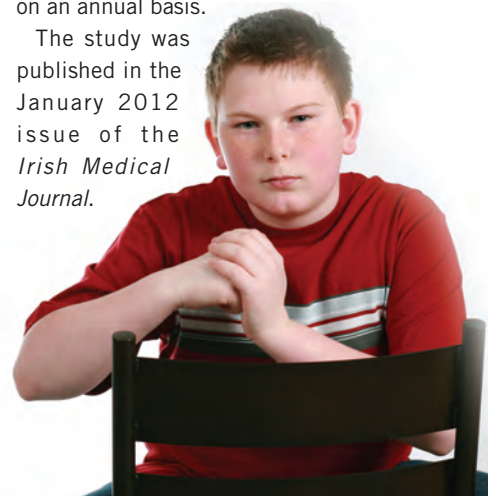
Almost one-in-four parents said each family member did not usually eat the same food at dinner, with many parents cooking separate meals for different family members more than once

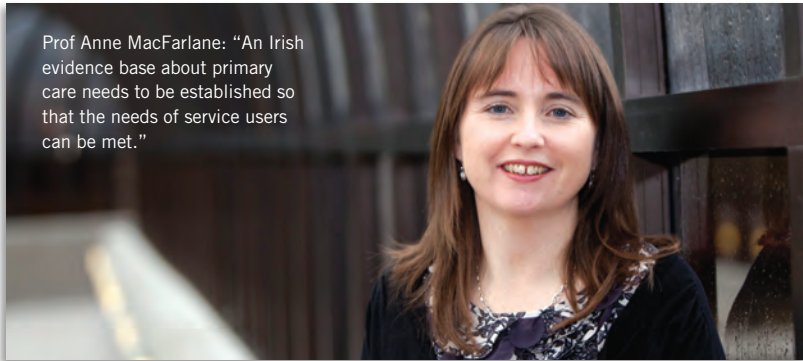
a week or daily. Almost one-in-two of the families said they ate pre-prepared foods once a week. The study found that parents had lower rates of perception of overweight in their sons than in their daughters.

The GPs in the practice took action on the children's weight problems. This included provision of verbal and written information on diet and lifestyle and an invitation where necessary for a further review. The GPs found that surprisingly, most parents responded positively to these interventions.

The authors say it is paramount for GPs to raise the issue of childhood obesity with parents or it is likely to be overlooked. They propose that GPs adopt a policy to include routine documentation of BMI for age in all children on an annual basis.

The study was published in the January 2012 issue of the *Irish Medical Journal*.





Prof Anne MacFarlane: "An Irish evidence base about primary care needs to be established so that the needs of service users can be met."

## Ireland's first female professor in academic primary healthcare

Anne MacFarlane has been appointed professor of primary healthcare (research) at the Graduate Entry Medical School (GEMS) at Limerick University. Prof MacFarlane is the first social scientist to hold a chair in academic primary care in Ireland, and the first female professor in this discipline in Ireland.

A native of Bishopstown, Cork, Prof MacFarlane is a social scientist with 20 years experience of health services research using qualitative research methods. Her research has consistently focused on people's experiences of health and illness and on their experiences of using primary care health services.

Speaking about the significance of primary healthcare research in Ireland, Prof MacFarlane said: "We need a high-quality evidence base about primary care. This needs to be generated in Irish primary care settings so that services meet the needs of service users and their families. My focus is on ensuring

that service users have a 'voice' in generating that evidence base."

In her research, Prof MacFarlane focuses on the involvement of people from marginalised or disadvantaged communities in primary care research and development projects. She uses participatory research methods and a contemporary social theory about introducing and embedding innovation in healthcare settings.

Prof MacFarlane is currently leading a €2.9 million EU project on communication between migrants and healthcare providers in cross-cultural primary care consultations and a Health Research Board project about involving people from disadvantaged communities in primary care teams.

Her work has involved national collaborators such as the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, the HSE National Advocacy Unit and the Centre for Participatory Strategies, Galway, as well as a host of international collaborators in the UK and Europe.

Pictured with the national 'Appy' award for the Irishhealth.com Child Immunisation Tracker, which won the award as Ireland's 'Best Educational App' were: (l-r) Leon Ellison, MedMedia Group, Aoife Byrne, Danone Baby Nutrition and John Gibbons, publisher, Irishhealth.com



## News in brief

- The ICGP has developed a website in conjunction with Groupschemes.com to provide hundreds of discounts to its members and practice staff. Access to this website is a benefit of being a member of the College. Groupschemes.com uses its purchasing power to secure large discounts with well-known brands and retailers. This means that you and your staff can get access to a wide range of savings on day-to-day items such as travel, health, finance and food. The College will be emailing everyone with details about the website and how to register. For further details see page XXX.

- The ICGP AGM will be taking place on Friday-Sunday, May 11-13, 2012 at the Radisson Hotel, Galway. The programme will be available shortly on the College website [www.icgp.ie](http://www.icgp.ie)

- The deadline for application for the RCGP travel bursary 2012 is February 29. Applications for the bursary should be sent to Monika Lauder at Email: [roi@rcgp.ie](mailto:roi@rcgp.ie) For queries, contact one of the three adjudicators: Dr Mary Favier at [maryfavier@gmail.com](mailto:maryfavier@gmail.com); Dr Joe Martin at [josephmartin@hotmail.com](mailto:josephmartin@hotmail.com); or Dr Eamonn Shanahan at [ers@indigo.ie](mailto:ers@indigo.ie)

- *A Picture of General Practice 2011*: This ICGP publication of selected research and audit abstracts is now available, providing a picture of general practice in Ireland through research and audit activity. See [www.icgp.ie/research](http://www.icgp.ie/research)

- The ICGP Research and Education Foundation is now inviting applications for funding. Full details and application forms are available on [www.icgp.ie/research](http://www.icgp.ie/research) Closing date for application is April 27.

- A theory course in cervical smear-taking will start on Thursday, February 23 in Athlone, Co Westmeath. The cost of the course is €650. To register, please visit [www.icgp.ie](http://www.icgp.ie)

- The National Trainers Conference will be taking place on February 9-10 at the Lyrath Estate Hotel, Kilkenny. The event, sponsored by Pfizer and MPS, will see many prominent speakers addressing the audience through presentations, workshops and quick updates.

## Nominations sought for Fiona Bradley Medal

Nominations for the Fiona Bradley Foundation Medal is open until February 10. The medal will be awarded at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Dublin on March 9. To nominate a candidate, please contact Andrew Murphy at Email: [andrew.murphy@nuigalway.ie](mailto:andrew.murphy@nuigalway.ie)

The organisers ask that prospective candidates not be informed of their nomination.

## Dublin to host conference on travel medicine

The Travel Medicine Society of Ireland, in partnership with its sister organisations, will be hosting the fourth Northern European Conference on Travel Medicine at the Burlington Hotel, Dublin on June 6-8.

The programme will include all aspects of the rapidly evolving discipline of travel medicine, from the basics such as vaccines, malaria prophylaxis and traveller's diarrhoea to the challenges of migration and occupational medicine in a globalised world. The conference is CME accredited for GPs and nurses. Registration and abstract submission is now open at [www.nectm.com](http://www.nectm.com)

## LARC tutor course to provide update for teaching doctors

The ICGP LARC programme is seeking to formalise and expand its network of LARC tutors. The aim of the LARC tutor course is to provide an update for doctors who are teaching insertions of IUCD and/or subdermal implants to GP trainees or are interested in teaching these skills. By attending the course you will formally become a LARC tutor and be able to teach these skills and to certify trainees who wish to apply for the Advanced Certificate of Contraception.

The course is for experienced inserters of long-acting reversible contraception working in GP training practices.

The date for the course is February 9. 9.30am-12.30pm, in conjunction with the National Trainers Conference in the Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny.

There is no cost involved in attending this course, which provides one CME study leave session and three CPD external credits. Applicants must:

- Be working in a GP training practice
- Be registered with the Medical Council

- Be experienced in either IUCD and/or subdermal implant insertions and have inserted a minimum of 12 IUCDs or 12 implants over the previous 12 months

- Commit to applying for the Advanced Certificate in Contraception phase 1 – see [www.icgp.ie/womenshealth](http://www.icgp.ie/womenshealth)

As places are limited, early application is advisable. Topics covered during the course will include LARC clinical update, instrumentation, case discussions and management of complications.

The director of the course, Dr Meera Kishen, is a recently retired consultant in sexual and reproductive healthcare with the Liverpool Primary Care Trust.

Another LARC tutor course will take place in the Radisson Hotel, Galway on May 10 at 2-5pm. Please register your interest with Kirstin Smith at Email: [kirstin.smith@icgp.ie](mailto:kirstin.smith@icgp.ie)

This course has been funded by an unrestricted education grant from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.

## The concept of mindfulness – a critical appraisal



Dear Editor,

Mindfulness is a new approach for stress reduction. It is based on the seventh step of the eightfold path of Buddhism. Mindfulness is more than a simple meditative stress-relieving practice; it is rooted in an outlook on life and reality that is designed to cultivate a sense of detachment.

Buddhism holds that the self does not exist and identification with the self keeps you in a continuous cycle of rebirth. To achieve liberation from this cycle one must break free from self-attachment – hence detachment is necessary. Mindfulness is the method and detachment the process through which one ultimately becomes liberated (from self), thus achieving a state of complete detachment: Nirvana. This process of detachment is often defined as a moment-by-moment non-judgemental awareness of the present.

The concept of mindfulness is now fast permeating the Irish healthcare community and therefore deserves some critical appraisal. If one practises this meditation on a regular basis we may endorse and eventually adopt the worldview behind it, accepting that the process of detachment is helpful to us and useful for our patients. However, if we accept that the self is actually real and that there can be no true detachment from it, then a conscious and active pursuit of liberation from self must be seriously questioned, especially in the consulting room.

While mindfulness purports to seek detachment from self, it actually involves doing the exact opposite. Being mindful basically means concentrating on yourself. The techniques involved in mindfulness meditation may be equated to that of self-hypnosis. In this state, the practitioner's critical thinking and judgement are suspended, thus leaving the mind open to virtually anything.

The consultation is an active engagement with a very meaningful relational interaction between two very existent and important people: the doctor and the patient. The consultation is the process which deserves to be strongly supported and protected by our profession for the good of our patients and for the benefit of the profession. This Buddhist meditation, in my view, has the potential to undermine the unique dialogue, function and relationship which we engage in daily as GPs.

I think we, as GPs, need to think very carefully about assimilating an Eastern meditative technique into our personal and professional lives. In my view, it involves intensive and unhealthy introspection while detaching ourselves from rational and informed momentary reasoning. Mindfulness does not underpin better care, but undermines the activity of active listening, cognitive reasoning and a true expression of empathy in the consultation.

**Dr Richard Gavin**  
Cornerstone Medical Practice, Drogheda