

An Saol Foundation  
**Press Release**



**For Immediate Release**

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**Professor Joseph J. Fins of Weill Cornell Medical College to lead Expert Group for Santry-based Neuro Rehab Centre**

The An Saol Foundation today announced that Professor Joseph J. Fins has agreed to chair the Executive Committee of the An Saol Project, a pilot demonstrator supported by the Health Service Executive (HSE) creating a Neurological Rehabilitation Day Centre service in Santry, Dublin, aimed at adults with a severe Acquired Brain Injury (sABI). The new service addresses a long-standing gap in community-based rehabilitation and is the first Centre of its kind in the country.

Dr. Fins is *The E. William Davis, Jr. M.D. Professor of Medical Ethics*, Chief of the Division of Medical Ethics and Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College and Chair of the Ethics Committee at New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell where he is an Attending Physician and Director of Medical Ethics. A member of the Adjunct Faculty and Senior Attending Physician at Rockefeller University, he co-directs the Consortium for the Advanced Study of Brain Injury (CASBI) at Weill Cornell Medicine and Rockefeller. He is the *Solomon Center Distinguished Scholar in Medicine, Bioethics and the Law* and Visiting Professor of Law at Yale Law School where he directs CASBI@YLS.

An Saol's new Neuro Rehab Centre started to deliver services to adults with a sABI and their families in 2020 despite significant challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centre is now also open to clients with neurological injuries and conditions based in the Community, offering a range of rehabilitation therapies – including physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical exercise programmes - as well as access to a wide selection of robot-assisted gait training devices, functional electrical stimulation (FES), a TechLab, social rehabilitation activities, and support for activities of daily living.

The Centre greatly values the role and the contribution of the families and the circle of support of those with a sABI and actively involves them in the rehabilitation programmes. The Centre is fully committed to a client-centred approach. Quality of Life, social inclusion, equality, and participation are guiding principles of its work.

It is the role of the Executive Committee to review the work of the Centre and provide strategic guidance to foster its development.

Reinhard Schäler, CEO An Saol Foundation, said, “Prior to the establishment of the Centre no specialised services were available in Ireland to support those with a sABI living with their families in the community or those with other neurological conditions and injuries. We are grateful to the Government and to the HSE that they had the foresight to fund our project,

and we are delighted that Professor Fins, one of the world-leading experts in the field, has agreed to chair our Executive Committee of eminent national and international experts.”

Professor Joseph J. Fins said, “I am honoured and delighted to chair the Executive Committee and help realize the aspirations of An Saol to meet the needs of patients and families touched by severe brain injury. I look forward to working with Mr. Schaler and other members of the Executive Committee to improve the care for these patients and promote their human rights.”

The following experts have agreed to join the Executive Committee led by Professor Fins:

- Professor Andreas Bender, Clinical Director, Neuro-Rehabilitation Hospital Burgau/Germany and Research Associate University of Munich/Germany
- Ms. Brigitta Farkas, Founder and Owner Beaumont Physiotherapy, Dublin/Ireland
- Dr. Martin Huber, Consultant, Neuro-Rehabilitation Hospital Burgau/Germany. Clinical Lead of the Hospital’s Specialist Spasticity Programme
- Ms. Christiane Knorr, Deputy Therapy Lead Neuro-Rehabilitation Hospital Burgau and Bobath Supervisor
- Dr. Michael Poschmann, Head of Department, Specialist Centre for Paediatric and Neuro-Orthopaedics, Schön-Klinik Munich/Germany
- Reinhard Schäler (ex officio), Founder and CEO, An Saol Foundation, Dublin/Ireland

### **Contact Information (Press only)**

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### **About Members of the An Saol Project Executive Committee**

#### **Professor Joseph J. Fins (Chair)**

Joseph J. Fins, M.D., M.A.C.P., F.R.C.P. is The E. William Davis, Jr. M.D. Professor of Medical Ethics and Chief of the Division of Medical Ethics at Weill Cornell Medical College where he is a Tenured Professor of Medicine, Professor of Medical Ethics in Neurology, Professor of Medical Ethics in Rehabilitation Medicine, Professor of Health Care Policy and Research, and Professor of Medicine in Psychiatry. He is the founding Chair of the Ethics Committee of New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medicine. A member of the Adjunct Faculty of Rockefeller University and Senior Attending Physician at The Rockefeller University Hospital, he co-directs, the Consortium for the Advanced Study of Brain Injury (CASBI). At Yale Law School, he is the Solomon Center Distinguished Scholar in Medicine, Bioethics and the Law. The author of over 400 publications, he is a co-author of the 2007 landmark Nature paper describing neuromodulation in the minimally conscious state. His most recent book is *Rights Come to Mind: Brain Injury, Ethics, and The Struggle for Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press). A past president of the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities, Dr. Fins is a member of the Board of Trustees of The Hastings Center and President-Elect of International Neuroethics Society and a past Governor of the American College of Physicians, where he is a Master of the College. Dr. Fins is an elected Member of the National Academy of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Royal College of Physicians (London). By royal decree he was named an Académico de Honor (Honored Academic) of the Spanish National Royal Academy of Medicine. He was appointed by President Clinton to The White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy and serves on The New York State Task Force on Life and the Law by gubernatorial appointment. Dr. Fins was graduated from Cornell University Medical College and

Wesleyan University which honoured him with its Distinguished Alumnus Award and where he serves as a Trustee Emeritus.

### **Professor Andreas Bender**

Professor Bender heads a neurorehabilitation hospital in Bavaria/Germany and is Research Associate at the University of Munich/Germany, Grosshadern Campus. His research is focused on rehabilitation outcome and especially on coma prognosis and outcome. He is a Principal Investigator (PI) of two multicentre observational outcome studies employing high-density (HD) electroencephalograms (EEG) with 256 electrodes to predict coma recovery and to distinguish vegetative state (VS) from minimally conscious state (MCS). Professor Bender is Medical and Scientific Advisor to the An Saol Foundation.

### **Brigitta Farkas**

Ms Brigitta Farkas, Chartered Physiotherapist, established Beaumont Physiotherapy in 2012 to provide physiotherapy in the community. The physiotherapists working with her are all CORU registered, Chartered Physiotherapists with over 10 years of experience. Her practice treats postural, biomechanical, and musculoskeletal conditions, sports injuries as well as neurological injuries and conditions.

### **Dr. Martin Huber**

Dr. Huber is a consultant in physical medicine and rehabilitation with several decades of experience in his field. He has been a senior physician for many years at a neurorehabilitation hospital in Bavaria, Germany. During the course of his work, he has treated several Irish patients with severe Acquired Brain Injury (sABI) who attended his hospital. Dr. Huber is the Clinical Lead of his hospital's Specialist Spasticity Programme.

### **Christiane Knorr**

Ms. Christiane Knorr is an Occupational Therapist with many years of experience working with neurological patients, especially those with brain injuries. She is Deputy Therapy Lead in a neurological rehabilitation hospital, a Bobath Supervisor, and specialises in device-assisted therapy. During the course of her work, she has treated several Irish patients with severe Acquired Brain Injury (sABI) who attended the Burgau therapy centre.

### **Dr. Michael Poschmann**

Dr. Poschmann is Head of Department in a Specialist Centre for Paediatric and Neuro-Orthopaedics. He is a leading specialist for neuro orthopaedics and trauma surgery, paediatric orthopaedics, and chirotherapy. He is a clinical adviser to the An Saol Foundation Project.

#### **About Severe Acquired Brain Injury (sABI)**

A brain injury that involves a long period of unconsciousness (coma) and a prolonged disorder of conscience (PDOC). Persons with an sABI are very highly dependent, are often non- or minimally-verbal, and require, in most cases, life-long support with basic activities of daily living (ADL) as well as life-long rehabilitation.

#### **About the An Saol Foundation**

The An Saol Foundation was established in 2014 by the family of Pádraig Schaler to provide adequate and ongoing support to people with a severe Acquired Brain Injury (sABI). It now also offers neurological rehabilitation in the community. It is a registered charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Foundation received its initial funding through a generous donation from the parents of Sara Walsh († 2015) and has since received financial support from various fundraising activities, donations and funded projects. The Foundation operates from its headquarters in Dublin and delivers its services in Dublin and beyond. To achieve its goals, the Foundation promotes awareness about sABI and neurological rehabilitation, supports research, delivers neurological rehabilitation services, raises funds, and engages in related support activities. The Foundation runs the An Saol Project which is co-funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE).