



**EARLY INTERVENTION REDUCES LOWER BACK PAIN  
DISABILITY – MINISTER MARY COUGHLAN**

Mary Coughlan, TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs today launched the Renaissance Project – a study on preventing chronic disability from low back pain.

“The Renaissance Project set out to identify whether early intervention, using international evidence-based guidelines in an Irish pilot study, would decrease the incidence of progression to chronic disability from low back pain. I welcome the outcome of the project which shows that early intervention does lead to a significant reduction in chronic disability,” said Minister Coughlan.

“It means a quicker return to work for those who are temporarily afflicted by lower back pain. This will be for the benefit of workers, their families who shoulder the burden of support, and employers. There will also be benefits to society through cost savings in health care, reduced absenteeism from work and resulting decreased production and reduced numbers going on to long term illness benefit schemes,” added Minister Coughlan.

Back pain is not a new phenomenon, it has been known throughout recorded history – and in recent years there has been a marked increase in chronic disability resulting from low back pain. This is worrying as this trend continues in spite of advances in health and safety legislation, ergonomics, automation, technology and medical science.

“I look forward to working with Dr. Leech and the required coalition of professionals, in a wide range of representative bodies, to spread the message that early intervention works in dealing with lower back pain”, said Minister Coughlan.

The author of this internationally acclaimed study is Dr Clement Leech, Deputy Chief Medical Adviser of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. A copy of the study is available in the publications area of the website of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

**ENDS September 28<sup>th</sup> September 2004**