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Compiled by **Elaine O'Regan**

Mobile X-ray service to bring diagnostics to your door

• Currently operating in nursing homes, the firm could become the first in Europe to offer such services to people in their own homes

Her profession, combined with her personal experience caring for elderly parents, prompted nurse Mary Jones to set up a new venture two years ago offering mobile X-ray services to care home residents in Ireland. "I was the manager of the eye department at Blackrock [Clinic] when I came up with the idea," said Jones. "My dad was in a nursing home at the time. He had Parkinson's and he was quite disabled. My mother-in-law was in another nursing home on the other side of the city with advanced Alzheimer's."

"Both were using walking frames at different times and my husband and I had to bring them to emergency departments quite a few times to get X-rays. "On only one of those occasions did we find a fracture, but they had to leave the nursing home each time to be X-rayed, so I witnessed first-hand the distress and logistical difficulties involved when they needed to be transferred to the hospital." In search of an alternative option that would allow elderly people to undergo X-rays in situ, Jones came up with the idea for Mobile Medical Diagnostics.

"I spent several months researching and travelling to Norway, Boston and Germany and decided to introduce a mobile X-ray service," she said. She incorporated Mobile Medical Diagnostics in Dublin in August 2017 and launched the service in the Dublin area last October, having secured the necessary licence approval from the Environmental Protection Agency. "We move the equipment, not the patient. We transport the equipment to the nursing home, so the patient can remain in their own bed," said Jones, who has to date provided the service to residents in

nine nursing homes. "I've applied to have my licence extended, so we can provide the service to people who are elderly or immobile receiving care in their own homes," she said. "If we get this extension, we will to my knowledge be the only country in Europe with this service. "Eventually, I hope to have a suite of mobile remote diagnostics for ultrasound, bone density and cardiac diagnostics."

Mary Jones, owner:
"We move the equipment, not the patient"



Mary Jones, a qualified nurse and founder of Dublin company Mobile Medical Diagnostics

Fergal Phillips

What's Next for Inglot franchise entrepreneurs?

Entrepreneurialism runs in Jane Swarbrigg's family. Together with her mother Geraldine, Swarbrigg brought Polish cosmetic brand Inglot to the Irish market ten years ago. Geraldine Swarbrigg was, by that time, well established in retail, having brought fashion brands Aldo, Vero Moda, Jack & Jones and Exit Kids to the Irish market. Despite the onset of recession, the pair decided to acquire the Inglot franchise for the Irish market, opening their first cosmetics outlet in 2009 at Liffey Valley Shopping Centre in Dublin. The cosmetics company was founded by Polish chemist Wojciech Inglot in 1983 and now has 740 stores in 80 countries.

The Swarbriggs were joined in 2010 by Jane's brother Peter Swarbrigg in the role of financial director, and were offered the brand's British franchise in 2017. They opened their first British outlet in Newcastle followed by additional shops in London, Gateshead and Glasgow in Scotland. Inglot Cosmetics now employs more than 300 people at 22 stores in Ireland and Britain and sells online at inglot.ie and inglot.co.uk. The Swarbriggs opened Itec-certified make-up academies in Dublin, Cork and Galway last year and, more recently, began selling wholesale to pharmacies in the Irish market. The franchise has also secured a listing with online beauty retailer Cloud 10. They recently signed a British contract with Next, which

will see Inglot concession stores open at two of the retailer's outlets at the Arndale and Trafford shopping centres in Manchester this month. The move marks the Swarbriggs' first excursion into concession retailing in Britain and follows the opening of three standalone Inglot shops in England and Scotland. Inglot's flagship British shop opened last November at Westfield, in White City in London. "While our business is strong, retail is an industry undergoing transformation with new channels driving growth," said Jane Swarbrigg, managing director at Inglot Ireland. "Diversification is vital for success, which is why this strategic partnership with Next is so significant. "Next has more than 500



Jane Swarbrigg, managing director at Inglot Ireland:
"Diversification is vital for success in retail"

Peter and Jane Swarbrigg: the family own the Inglot brand franchise for Ireland and Britain

Fergal Phillips

stores across Britain and Ireland. Not only will it broaden our distribution and geographic reach, but it also presents an opportunity for Inglot to reach new audiences

in the Next customer base." The Swarbriggs are also eyeing potential standalone store locations in Birmingham, Essex and Cardiff. "At home, we're focusing on the

wholesale market, selling to pharmacies in regional towns in Ireland where we don't already have an existing store," said Swarbrigg. "We're rolling out the Inglot

brand in a number of pharmacies, beginning with CH Chemists in Tralee, Burke's Pharmacy in Naas and McElhinney's department store in Ballybofey, Co Donegal."

Done Deal

Dizzy heights for Everest Snacks

Food company Everest Snacks is valuing a deal with forecourt retailer Applegreen at €500,000 million over 12 months. Applegreen began stocking Everest's granola yogurt pots at 170 sites in January. The new agreement will expand this to include other products in the Everest range, including protein bars and microwavable porridge pots. "We anticipate a forecasted turnover of over half a million, accumulated from all Applegreen retail nationwide, and we hope to increase this year-on-year through enhanced marketing activity and new product innovation," said Seamus Tighe, managing director of Everest Snacks. Tighe established Everest Snacks in 2014. The company's sales have since risen from €100,000 to a projected €2 million for the current financial year.



Noel O'Regan, managing director of Pemac
Picture: Clare Keogh

Noel O'Regan, founder:
"We have turned a service company into a software company"

Software company gets set to go global Tech platform a springboard for success

Irish-owned software company Pemac is gearing up for international expansion, having invested several million euro in a new web-based computer maintenance management platform for the pharmaceutical, food and beverage sectors. The Cork company is believed to have ploughed in the region of €4 million into developing the platform over six years with support from state agency Enterprise Ireland. Pemac's managing director Noel O'Regan established the company in 2009, having acquired a division of project management group PM that sold computer software to simplify maintenance management in manufacturing facilities. "We have basically turned that service company into a software com-

pany, because we had the business knowledge to do it," said O'Regan. "When I took on the company, we were in recession and the building industry in Ireland had more or less fallen apart. "That allowed me to focus on recruiting people with the business knowledge we would need to build the new platform. We understood profoundly verticals like the food industry, pharmaceutical and beverage." The Pemac Assets platform uses IoT technologies to predict and prevent problems with critical manufacturing equipment. A modular web-based application, it has several modules for work order and inventory management, machine integrations and calibrations

and asset registering. "We are in the final throes of signing a deal with one global company here in Ireland. That deal will take us from one site in Ireland to their 27 sites worldwide," said O'Regan. "That's just one company, but because we now have this web-based platform that can be completely localised in terms of languages and currencies, we are ready to internationalise." O'Regan said Pemac's focus to date had been on software development, but that the primary driver for the company now had switched to sales and marketing. "There is a direct market available to us in Ireland and Britain. In other jurisdictions, we want to build a network of international partners and resellers," he said.

Lab supply firm celebrates three decades with €10m contract

Clare company Reagecon Diagnostics will mark 30 years in business next year. In the intervening years, the laboratory supplier has expanded its reach to 178 countries worldwide. Reagecon makes physical and chemical standards and reagents used in laboratories to calibrate scientific instruments in the food, pharmaceutical and other sectors. The company employs 100 people at a 64,000 square foot facility in the Shannon Free Zone and an overseas office in the Chinese city of Shanghai. "It was absolutely imperative for us to export from day one, but our growth has been a gradual process," said John Barron, managing director at Reagecon Diagnostics. "There was no overnight success. We just kept plugging away trying to find channels to market." Reagecon's two primary channels are distributors and global laboratories suppliers. The company sells to the latter on a private label and branded basis. "In Ireland we sell directly to end-users, but in almost all other countries we have a distributor," said Barron. "It's a question of finding the right distributors, setting parameters and rules and building a relationship. Sometimes it takes off and sometimes it doesn't." Reagecon signed a contract with a Chinese distributor last November valued at €10 million. The five-year deal will see Beijing Thorigin distrib-



John Barron, co-founder:
"Ours is very much a niche business and very high-tech"

John Barron, managing director, Reagecon Diagnostics

Fergal Ward

ute close to 10,000 products manufactured by the Shannon company in the Chinese market. It follows the recent launch of new Reagecon products aimed at the life sciences, environmental and geology sectors, all growth areas in the Chinese market. Barron estimates that Reagecon has invested €4 million over the past six years in research and development. "Ours is very much a niche business and very high-tech. There are really only 20 producers of standards in the world and we have the largest range of products," he said. "We have in excess of 10,000 products and all of them were developed in-house. We've been well resourced on that front in recent years by Enterprise Ireland with grant aid under their

R&D funding [mechanisms]. "We're now starting a new product development initiative in conjunction with Limerick Institute of Technology. We'll spend probably €500,000 this year and next on that project." Barron was one of Reagecon's original four-strong founding team. Before co-founding the company in 1990, he had worked as a microbiologist with Dublin's Mater Hospital, as technical director with Novapath and director of research at Flemming GMBH. "It's hard to pinpoint why I wanted to set up my own business. I suppose it was partly the challenge and also the sense of independence," he said. "If you get it right, there is the potential that it can be quite lucrative. Those are the main drivers, really."

Opensky to take on 80 staff

Kildare company Opensky Data Systems will create 80 jobs this year and next as part of a €2.5 million expansion plan announced last week. The recruitment drive will take headcount at Opensky to 160 by the end of 2021. The new roles will include digital transformation consultants, software engineers, sales and marketing executives, and project and team leaders. Opensky specialises in software and managed services for public sector bodies. The Naas company has completed 50 public sector projects in Ireland and Britain. Irish clients include the Health Service Executive, the National Transport Authority and the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation.

Solvotrin Active in German market

Healthcare and medicine development company Solvotrin Therapeutics has entered into a partnership with German healthcare company Roha APD. Under the agreement, Roha APD will distribute Solvotrin's Active Iron brand to pharmacies in the German market from June. "This is a great opportunity for Active Iron. We estimate that the German launch will deliver €15 million in retail sales value over the next five years," said Ronan McClafferty, global commercial director at Solvotrin.