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**Irish Latin American Research Fund**  
**Application Form**

Name	Fiona Clark
Address	St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Eire
Telephone	353-1-8002118
Fax	353-1-8376197
Email	Fiona.clark@spd.dcu.ie
University or institutional affiliation (if any)	(Please specify department) St Patrick's College, History Department
Member of the Faculty?	No [ ] Yes [ x ] If yes, rank: Postdoctoral Fellow
Student?	Undergraduate [ ] Graduate [ ] Principal advisor or thesis director:
Independent Scholar?	No [ x ] Yes [ ]
Intended Product	Thesis [ ] Dissertation [ ] Book [ x ] Article [ ] Documentary [ ] Other [ ] (describe)
Date degree expected or date of project completion	December 2007
Title or research topic (please include the time period being studied):	Title: <u>Daniel O'Sullivan: an Irish military physician in the Spanish colonial world</u>  Time Period: late eighteenth century
How did you learn about this research grant opportunity? (Please be specific)	The information was forwarded to me from colleagues at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland
Proposed field trip: purpose, destination, dates of travel and proposed duration of stay (may be changed)	Purpose: to access and work with archival documents Destination: Mexico City Dates of Travel: September/October 2006 Duration of trip: one month
Estimate of actual expenses; please provide details of air, automobile, bus, rail, or other expenses and local accommodations (please add an itemized budget):	Travel Airfare 680 EUR, Local Accommodation - 280 EUR, Subsistence = 160 EUR.  Total 1140 EUR.
Amount of grant support requested (in Euros)	1000 EUR.

## Project Description

### Daniel O'Sullivan: an Irish military physician in the Spanish colonial world

#### Aims of the current project:

This project will investigate the life and work of the little-known eighteenth-century Irish physician, Daniel O'Sullivan, bringing attention, for the first time, to the importance of his role in colonial Mexican history. By this means it will also provide valuable insights into the nature of Irish involvement in the Spanish Americas in the pre-Revolutionary period, as well as broaden research on Irish presence in the continental Universities and the transmission and exchange of ideas with Latin America in the late-colonial period.

#### Background:

Whilst there has been extensive research on the connections between Britain, Ireland and English America during the eighteenth century, present understanding of medical trans-Atlantic relations between the Spanish Americas and Ireland during the colonial period is significantly more limited. In recent years, studies focused on Spanish America have presented a more in-depth understanding of the systems and institutions of colonial medicine, including an overview of the role of foreign physicians and surgeons within the wider schema. Although we find mention of specific Europeans in various important contributions to the history of medicine in Spain and Spanish America, they act for the main part, merely as token recognition of the existence of foreign doctors in the Spanish realms during this period, tending to focus more on the connections with France than Ireland or Britain. As such, the details on Irish physicians and surgeons that have been presented to date are usually included within a more general chapter on all non-Spanish nationalities present and active whatever their status or their connection with the host country. The presence of such foreign medical practitioners is most frequently cited as showing that the Spanish government was not completely closed to active participation by foreign men of scientific and medical training in their domains, and that, indeed, contemporary medical and scientific ideas were apparent in education and practice, even if not always officially recognised.

Throughout the course of the century the appointment of foreign doctors in key positions and the tendency to consider foreign knowledge, especially the French, as superior to the Creole led to an increasingly negative response by Mexican-born practitioners. This situation is highlighted by the example of Viceroy's serving in Mexico who brought their own French doctors as part of their household. Moreover, in the first two decades of the eighteenth century the government was particularly lax in its dealings with foreigners but by the 1720s and into the 1740s Creole medics were strongly voicing their concerns and the Protomedicato was led to appeal to the king for the expulsion of those foreigners practising without a license. In the literary public sphere leading authors, both in Spain and Mexico, lamented the Spanish tendency to unquestioningly believe the statements made by such 'foreigners' in all areas of scientific interest, particularly when relating to health, as exemplified in the 1780s and 1790s by José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez in his literary-scientific periodical, the *Gazeta de Literatura de México*. Creole anxiety and mistrust is also linked to the wider political changes taking place throughout the century after the accession of the Bourbon monarchy to the Spain throne.

The economic and political reforms led by José de Gálvez from the mid-eighteenth century onward were to cause grave concern among many of the educated elite, specifically through the loss of right to positions of authority both in government and education. A concerted effort to shift the handling of power away from Creole hands into a centralised Spanish government was to have repercussions in the scientific world as much as in the political. Botanical expeditions sent by the peninsular authorities to the New World were not only to provide a means of accounting for the natural resources available for exploitation, they were also to establish the new scientific changes taking place across Europe in key institutions in the Spanish Americas. Mexico City, as one of the most advanced and highly educated centres of Iberian power in the New World, became the focus

of attention for these projects, much to the consternation of many of the established Creole elite. Several studies over the past two to three decades have demonstrated that the colonies were not mere passive recipients of metropolitan medical and scientific ideas but acted as critics and assessors of European systems that frequently did not match the reality of the Spanish American experience. As the century progressed the voice of Creole dissent and the demand for a more autonomous expression of Mexican knowledge became a constant in the polemics with incoming authorities and foreign 'experts'.

The changes in the practice and theory of medicine in the eighteenth century saw a new breed of self-assured medical man. This was in large part due to the increasingly important role that medicine was playing in sustaining social order and the shift from focusing on the wealthy clientele to a more general devotion to curing the diseases of the wider populace. As such, the medical man found, or created, a new space as 'producer and manager' of health promoting greater discussion on new theories of disease. The growing professionalization of the medical world and the institutionalisation of many interconnected areas of science brought new questions of identity and autonomy to the forefront of Creole experience and in many ways directed their response to Europeans arriving in the New World. The restrictions on foreigners working in the Spanish domains were, at least on paper, severe. Despite this fact, for medical practitioners there was often opportunity for greater flexibility due to the lack of adequately trained doctors in outlying regions. Spanish medicine had been highly developed politically from the very early stages in part through the medical and surgical regulations imposed under Charles V in the application of the laws of Castile on the Americas (1535), and later with the establishment of a Royal Protomedicato in America (1570). Over time the Protomedicato, usually situated in the viceregal capitals, became a tribunal of justice and guardian of public health. Whilst it had established a complex system of requirements to regulate the practice of medicine by foreign doctors it was often the case that both legitimate and illegitimate practitioners were allowed to continue in the colonies due to the needs of the populace. The strict regulations established by the Spanish government acted as a disincentive to those foreigners wishing to enter the colonies legally and possibly led to a greater number of qualified, as well as unqualified, doctors working illegally. In most cases existing records will apply only to those individuals who were brought to the attention of the authorities and whose efforts to prove their legality or worth passed through the Council of Indies and the Protomedicato.

#### Context of the current project:

Focusing on unstudied manuscripts and correspondence held in archives in Spain, France and Mexico, this study will trace O'Sullivan's early training in Europe, and conclude at the apogee of his career as a military physician/surgeon in Mexico. It will establish that unlike many foreign physicians who practised covertly in Mexico, O'Sullivan associated with the highest echelons of Spanish colonial society and was a decisive player in the advances of public medicine. He stands, in many ways, as an example of the new breed of self-assured medical man appearing in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Within the larger framework of Irish involvement in Europe and the Americas this study will focus on two particular areas that are significant to O'Sullivan: medicine, including his role in the Spanish infantry; and the transatlantic scientific networks with particular focus on science within the Spanish vision of empire.

The project can be divided into two broad sections: the first, focusing on his background and formation in the Universities and medical institutions in Europe; and the second, investigating the achievements and challenges of his career in Mexico. The initial stages of this study will set O'Sullivan in his Irish context, providing a brief overview of the socio-political circumstances that would have formed the basis of his early formative years in County Cork and highlight his place within the 'cohort' of young Irishmen who were travelling to France to pursue their studies, medical and otherwise, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. This period of formation will be further developed through an analysis of the progress of his studies in France in the 1770s (Toulouse and Montpellier) and his later travels through Paris, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dublin in an attempt to broaden his medical expertise and knowledge. This first phase in his professional

formation concludes with his arrival in Spain in the 1780s, again in an attempt to broaden his experience in the Spanish hospitals and scientific academies, and his incorporation into the Spanish army as Consulting Physician to the Infantry based in Puebla de los Ángeles in the 1790s.

By far the most significant part of this study begins with the examination of O'Sullivan's role as military physician in New Spain. It will examine the significance of his role in the midst of political and scientific change, and explore the effect of Creole discontent on the path of his career; including the positions he held in the army and the Mexican hospitals. Particular attention will be paid to analysing the importance of his work in the treatment of venereal disease and the changes he attempted to introduce in public and military medicine, including the impact of this process on later European cures. In this matter O'Sullivan is shown to confront the established medical authorities and to directly appeal to the Royal Academy of Medicine in Madrid in an attempt to counter what he felt were harmful and erroneous medical processes. It will ascertain, moreover, that O'Sullivan was one of the first scientifically trained foreigners in Mexico to take part in the Bourbon-sponsored botanical training, thereby becoming involved in one of the bitterest polemics surrounding the introduction of European scientific systems in colonial America involving the Royal Pontifical University and the Royal Protomedicato.

The project will also place O'Sullivan within the wider international community of science, exploring issues relating to identity and the extent to which science was used as a tool of empire. It will question the significance of the Irish in lands where they, whilst originating in the Old World, were of different national identity to the ruling elite, and, as such, comprise a minority within a minority. By focusing on O'Sullivan within the social, political and scientific context of his work, this research will explore both the potential and the limitations of Irish involvement in colonial Spanish America in the eighteenth century.

#### Proposed use of Travel Grant

This project is breaking new ground in many areas of the history of medicine in colonial Mexico. As such, very little work has so far been undertaken on the documents held in the relevant archives in Mexico City (particularly in the Archivo General de la Nación, the Archivo Histórico de la Facultad de Medicina de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). Access to these documents on an extended basis is, therefore, of the utmost importance to the successful completion of the study. Over the past months I have built a database of references to O'Sullivan that include reports by the government, the medical authorities, the university, hospitals and the Inquisition, as well as correspondence and reports maintained by O'Sullivan and relating to various physicians, institutions and figures of authority. This will be the first time that such a large body of material (from Ireland, France, Scotland, Spain and Mexico) will have been collected on this interesting and enigmatic figure. In order to access these documents and use them in conjunction with material relating to the wider context of relationships between the various institutions and individuals in colonial Mexico it will be necessary to spend one month working in the archives in Mexico City. Funding from the Irish Latin American Research fund would make it possible for me to travel to Mexico for this period of time and to work with documents that are unavailable in any other institution or country, thus enabling me to provide a broader and richer investigation of Irish involvement in the academic and medical institutions of Spanish America in the late-colonial period.