



Professor John Nolan



## Waterford based project is a real eye-opener

An EU funded project hosted at the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) has discovered new ways to improve vision using key nutrients found in fruit and vegetables.

Extensive eye tests in the CREST project led by Professor John Nolan identified that three pigments known as carotenoids, that are found in fruit and veg, protect the eye's macula, which is responsible for central and detailed vision.

The research is good news for patients in the early stages of age-related macular degeneration (AMD.)

Further research has shown that the carotenoids also help memory and reactions, so they may help to improve the quality of life for patients with Alzheimer's disease.

*"These carotenoids are now routinely used in eye care,"* said Prof Nolan. "Doctors are prescribing them internationally with great success.

*"It is remarkable that we have identified, through the use of natural, safe and cost-effective nutritional pigments, ways to enhance visual function in the general population, and for those with AMD."*

In total, CREST researchers received almost €6.5 million of private and public funding for follow-on work and according to Nolan, the European Research Council (ERC) is one of the best supporters for research programmes.

*"It created a unique platform to attract the best scientists and do the best research, which attracted funding,"* he said.

*"We are also getting international attention at conferences. We are leveraging the ERC's investment to take research to the next level."*

WIT has a great track record in research and was the first Institute of Technology in Ireland to receive the HR Excellence in Research designation from the European Commission.

