



31 May 2018

Imelda Munster, TD

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PQ Number: 22402/18

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if open disclosure has occurred in all known cases in circumstances in which errors under the BowelScreen programme have occurred in the screening and subsequent diagnosis and treatment regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question regarding open disclosure in the BowelScreen programme.

BowelScreen operates in line with the HSE's open disclosure policy, including in cases where serious incidents might occur. Open disclosure was applied during the serious incident regarding missed cancers at Wexford General Hospital, which occurred while carrying out procedures under contract to BowelScreen in 2013. This serious incident was investigated by the Safety Incident Management Team Report and subsequently by Professor Robert Steele in an external review and open disclosure with affected patients and families took place throughout both processes.

Quality underpins every aspect of the BowelScreen programme. Prior to its launch in 2012, the BowelScreen Quality Assurance (QA) Committee was formed, consisting of a multidisciplinary team of experts, drawn from the fields of endoscopy, radiology, histopathology, surgery and programme operation and administration. The QA Committee is responsible for the continuing oversight of quality within the Programme. The committee's purpose is to review the international standards, recommend best practice, monitor and support adherence of the standards by service providers.

There are a range of quality assurance measures in place, set out in BowelScreen's Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Colorectal Screening, which were last updated following international peer review in November 2017. At a screening level, there are a range of Key Performance Indicators in place, including the analysis of the faecal immunochemical test at a contracted laboratory with robust internal and external quality assurance processes. At a hospital level, there is continuous auditing of individual performances of endoscopists who carry out colonoscopies for BowelScreen.

In addition, the Terms of Reference of the Scoping Inquiry led by Dr Gabriel Scally includes "examining the other screening programmes operated by the National Screening Service particularly in relation to quality assurance and clinical audit, open disclosure and governance". The outcome of Dr Scally's Inquiry will therefore inform the further development of the BowelScreen programme.

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I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Damien McCallion". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Damien" and last name "McCallion" clearly distinguishable.

Damien McCallion
National Director
National Screening Service

Cc pquestions@hse.ie