



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála National Screening Service

13 December 2019

Our ref: HM/Communications

Deputy Martin Ferris
Email: martin.ferris@oireachtas.ie

PQ 49858/19

To ask the Minister the accuracy of the national bowel screening programme, if his attention has been drawn to failings in the system; and if he will make a statesman on the matter.

Dear Deputy

I refer to the above parliamentary question.

BowelScreen - The HSE National Bowel Screening Programme, established in 2012, is one of four national screening programmes in Ireland. The programme offers population-based bowel screening to approximately 230,000 eligible men and women aged 60 to 69 every two years. Since the programme started in 2012, BowelScreen has detected 718 cancers. The service has also detected and removed almost 19,000 pre-cancerous growths, that could have developed into bowel cancer.

The FIT screening home test is not a diagnostic test. Like all screening tests, it is carried out on people who seem to be healthy. They don't have symptoms.

Bowel screening aims to detect signs of bowel cancer at an early stage, where there are no symptoms. If bowel cancer is found early, it is easier to treat and there is a higher chance of recovery.

Bowel screening is a faecal immunochemical test, known as a FIT test, that looks for a level of blood in your stool. The vast majority (between 95% and 96%) of individuals will get a "negative" (normal) result. For almost 4% of people the result will be "positive" (not normal) and these individuals will be offered an appointment for further testing called a colonoscopy.

Bowel screening, like all screening tests, has limitations and may not always detect pre-cancerous or cancerous changes. This is why it is important to take up the invitation of the BowelScreen FIT test when invited and for people to attend their GP with any unusual signs or symptoms of bowel cancer.

BowelScreen's statistical bulletin 2016 – 2017 details the programme's most recent validated data. During 2016, 280,290 clients were invited for screening. Of these, 117,426 consented to screening and 111,609 completed and returned a satisfactory FIT test. To undertake screening, clients are invited by letter to take a FIT test, which is a home test kit that is returned for analysis by a contracted laboratory.

The full statistical bulletin can be viewed [here](#).

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

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National Screening Service



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coek
The National Breast Screening Programme



AN CLAR NAHÁIRIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CEIBREAFAS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coek
The National Bowel Screening Programme



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coek
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

Yours sincerely

Celine Fitzgerald
Interim CEO
National Screening Service

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BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Cioch
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERVICÉACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Pulóige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic
RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Béisíní do Diabéiteigh
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme