



26 June 2019

Lisa Chambers

Email: lisa.chambers@oireachtas.ie

PQ 24426/19

To ask the Minister for Health the number of smear test slides waiting to be viewed by laboratory; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy

I refer to the above parliamentary question.

CervicalCheck – The HSE National Cervical Screening Programme has experienced delays in processing cervical screening tests (smear tests) due to the unprecedented increase in demand for cervical screening, and subsequent pressure on our laboratory services, due to understandable concerns from women last year.

We have been working particularly closely with Medlab Pathology Ltd, which is the laboratory with the largest number of smear tests waiting to be processed, to process outstanding tests as a matter of priority. Since 1st May 2019, the laboratory has ceased receiving new samples and is focused on processing its backlog. We have agreed that it employs HPV (human papillomavirus) initial testing, followed by cytology, to process these tests. This ensures HPV positive samples are prioritised and resulted, which are from women who are considered to have the highest clinical needs. We are making progress in this regard, with a steady reduction in the laboratory's backlog.

In addition to this, following an extensive period of contract negotiations, the HSE has secured additional capacity from Quest Diagnostics, who will, alongside the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital (CWIUH) to provide the necessary capacity to allow the CervicalCheck programme continue until such time as the introduction of HPV Primary screening. Both Quest Diagnostics and CWIUH are long term, trusted, strategic partners of the HSE who have supplied screening services to the cervical screening programme for 11 and seven years respectively.

The table below shows the quantity of smear test samples waiting to be resulted, as of weekending 23rd June 2019.

Laboratory	Quantity of smear test samples
Quest Diagnostics	18,751
Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital	2,307
MedLab Pathology Ltd	25,967

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála National Screening Service

We apologise sincerely to women affected by these delays and we want to assure them that we are doing everything possible to process all outstanding smear tests as a matter of priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Frances McNamara
Head of Screening
National Screening Service

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Cionn
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CEIRIBHEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púilge
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic
RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Retiní do Diaibéitigh
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme