



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Deputy Michael McGrath  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

Cork University Maternity Hospital  
Wilton  
Cork  
T12 YE02  
Ireland

6<sup>th</sup> June 2019

PQ – 19144/19

**To ask the Minister for Health the position regarding the opening of the second gynaecology operating theatre at Cork University Maternity Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Michael McGrath**

Dear Deputy McGrath,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

In March 2017 CUMH and South/South West Hospital Group Management Team met with Minister Simon Harris. Detailed costings for the funding required to open the second Gynaecology theatre at CUMH were included in our 2017 Business Case prepared and presented to Minister Harris at this time. The Minister signed off on the CUMH Gynaecology Business Case, a multi-annual plan to tackle the Gynaecology Waiting List and invest in a sustainable Gynaecology Service for the women in the SSWHG region.

The three-year Business Case represented a phased structured approach with revenue and capital requirements totalling €6.5m and €7.5m respectively over the three-year duration of the plan. By the end of 2018 the revenue costs were to have reached €2.7m.

Based on the allocation for 2018 from the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) the funding for Obstetrics & Gynaecology development amounted to €265,000 for specified additional posts, of which approximately €195,000 was for Gynaecology posts.



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Cork University  
Maternity Hospital

*Women, babies and their families are the centre of our service as  
we strive for excellence and innovation.*

CUMH also got an additional €400,000 allocation for benign Gynaecology initiatives.

**Based on the above allocation CUMH was not in a position to open the second Gynaecology Theatre in 2018.**

CUMH committed to Minister Harris that it would continue to endeavour to reduce its waiting lists. In 2018 the plan that CUMH committed to and followed through on was as follows:

**Gynaecology Theatre Inpatient Waiting List:**

- With the support of the South /South West Hospital Group and the NTPF the CUMH rented Theatre space in the Mater Private Hospital Cork. CUMH Consultants operated on 87 'long waiters' from the waiting list at these sessions in 2018.
- **In 2019** CUMH Consultants plan to continue with this initiative and will operate on a total of 96 patients in the Mater Private Hospital Cork, so far this year 28 cases have been completed.

Since April 2017 the staff at CUMH have done their utmost to reduce patient waiting times on the Gynaecology Outpatient Waiting List. In just over two years we have reduced our Outpatient Waiting List numbers from **4,700** to **1,491** as of the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019. This is a reduction of **3,209** women which is an extraordinary number of patients to be seen, this required the staff to work on additional clinics over and beyond our normal capacity in CUMH. Now, as a result of this increased activity the Inpatient Waiting List is increasing at an alarming rate as many of these women await a surgical procedure.

We have concerns regarding the growing risks to these women who remain on this Inpatient Waiting List. We know time delays in operating on these women can have serious implications. There is a risk of cancers and other serious conditions developing or worsening as patients wait over a long period of time for surgery.

The number of women waiting for surgery has almost doubled in the space of 12 months from **545** on the 30th May 2018 to **1041** on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

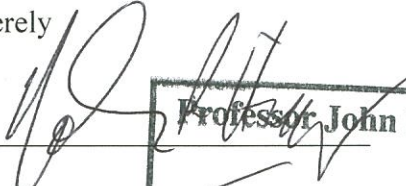
We have an idle theatre in the CUMH which if funded to open could more than double our throughput of patients each week and help reduce the increasing number of women waiting to be operated on and eliminate the unacceptable long waiting times.

In May of this year we updated our Business Case for the opening the second Gynaecology Theatre and resubmitted this to the Minister for approval.

We, in CUMH wait in hope and expectation that the funding signed off by Minister Harris in the 2017 Gynaecology Business Case will arrive in 2019, allowing us to open the second theatre which has been lying idle since the CUMH opened in 2007.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



John R. Higgins

*Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*  
*Clinical Director Maternity Directorate*  
*South/Southwest Hospital Group*

**Professor John R. Higgins**  
**13 JUN 2019**  
**Approved**