



12th November 2019

Deputy Alan Kelly, T.D.,
Dail Eireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Kelly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your Parliamentary Questions below which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

PQ 44256/19: 'To ask the Minister for Health the spending by the HSE under the hepatitis C treatment programme in 2018 to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement of the matter'

PQ 44254/19: 'To ask the Minister for Health the key performance indicators that have been set for the hepatitis C treatment programme; the way in which the programme evaluates its work towards the stated goal of elimination of the disease by 2026; the reporting requirements the programme adheres to ;and if he will make a statement of the matter'

PQ 44255/19: 'To ask the Minister for Health the data the HSE has in terms of estimating the number of persons here with hepatitis C; the overall prevalence of hepatitis C here; and if he will make a statement of the matter'.

I refer to the above parliamentary questions in relation to the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme. I wish to advise that the HSE is providing a composite response to the three Parliamentary Questions above.

Funding

I refer to the above parliamentary question in relation to spending by the HSE for the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme (NHCTP) in 2018 and 2019 to date. The details for 2018 and 2019 are outlined hereunder:

Year	Total Expenditure
2018	€22,122,418
2019	€16,303,621(to end of Oct)

The NHCTP envisages that expenditure at the end of this year will be similar to the year-end figure of 2018.

Expenditure also includes resourcing requirements for the Acute Hospital Treatment Sites along with the purchase of Mobile Fibroscans for the Community Service. In addition, the programme supports awareness campaigns such as World Hepatitis Day on an annual basis to raise awareness that Hepatitis C is curable and treatment is free in the Republic of Ireland. The goal of the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme is to treat as many people as possible and to encourage



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people who may be in a high risk group to come forward to be tested. In this regard, the funding priorities for 2019 and beyond are:

- To promote the awareness of Hepatitis C and need to get tested and treated
- Seek and Treat' harder to reach people in high risk groups.
- Encourage and support by raising awareness of the need to get tested and treated.
- Progression of the Community G.P/Pharmacy Dispensing Pilot.

Key Performance Indicators

The NHCTP reports on the following key performance indicators on a monthly basis to the Business Unit, Health Service Executive:

- The number of patients registered to National Hepatitis C registry with funding approved for hepatitis C treatment commencement.
 - The number of patients registered to National Hepatitis C registry with funding approved for hepatitis C treatment commencement for whom treatment has commenced.
 - The number of patients registered to National Hepatitis C registry with funding approved for hepatitis C treatment commencement for whom treatment has not yet commenced.
1. A Programme Advisory Group (PAG) has also been in place since 2015 and its role is to provide strategic advice to the NHCTP. The National Hepatitis C Treatment Registry Report is a standard agenda item for each group where this information is reported, evaluated and discussed on a monthly basis. The report provides the following information on the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme:
 - Total number of registrations to date
 - Total number of patients pending treatment in the Registry
 - Total number of treatment starts to date
 - Treatments prescribed by Treatment Site to date
 - Treatments prescribed by Genotype
 - Treatment prescribed by treatment Site monthly
 2. The Programme as part of its governance structures has established a Clinical Advisory Group (CAG) which is chaired by the Clinical Lead to the Programme. Its role is to provide clinical advice and assist with developing treatment guidelines and models of care for Hepatitis C in all settings. The programme also reports to both the National Director Community Strategy and Planning and the Assistant National Director Primary Care Strategy and Planning.

Prevalence

Data for the NHCTP is compiled on a monthly basis by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics with the production of the National Hepatitis C Treatment Registry Report on a monthly basis. The registry monitors treatment uptake, activity, and prescribing trends and patients outcomes. It also provides a platform for clinicians to register patients whom intend commencing on treatment. The report provides the following information:

- Total number of registrations to date
- Total number of patients pending treatment in the Registry
- Total number of treatment starts to date



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- Treatments prescribed by Treatment Site to date
- Treatments prescribed by Genotype
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Hepatitis C became a notifiable disease in Ireland in 2004 and diagnostic data from the National Virus Reference Laboratory is also available.

In 2014 studies indicated that Ireland had a prevalence of 20,000-30,000. It should be noted that this is an estimate of the prevalence and the true prevalence rate in Ireland is unknown. There is no general screening of the population to determine prevalence rates. To date a national sero-prevalence study has not been undertaken. However, the NHCTP has observed a marked decline in numbers of newly diagnosed infections in recent years and a significant increase in the numbers of patients successfully completing treatment. In this regard the NHCTP is exploring the possibility of carrying out an epidemiological study in Ireland to support the eradication programme.

The National Hepatitis C Treatment Programmes current focus is to seek and treat the harder to reach client groups and has commenced the extension of the hepatitis C treatment within a number of HSE Addiction Treatment Centres. In addition the Programme has commenced a pilot for the further extension of treatment availability within the community setting outside of the Opioid Substitution Treatment clinics.

The NHCTP is committed to evolving the changing needs in Hepatitis C care for patients. A programme of work to refresh the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme Strategy and Planning Document 2020-2026 is underway led by the National Hepatitis C Clinical Lead and the Programme Manager for Hepatitis C. The refresh document is building on progress made since 2014 and will be completed by year end 2019 to ensure that the NHCTP goal of Hepatitis C becoming a rare disease by 2026 is realised

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley'.

Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Primary Care Strategy and Planning