



12<sup>th</sup> November, 2019

Deputy John Curran, TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2.

**PQ: 45393/19**

To ask the Minister for Health if all persons on methadone treatment have received screening and treatment for Hepatitis C; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Curran,

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

All patients in receipt of Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) whether with methadone or with buprenorphine containing products attending HSE Addiction services are offered screening for hepatitis C as a matter of routine. In addition if an individual is receiving OST from either a level 1 or 2 GP in the community they will be offered screening for hepatitis C on a yearly basis.

In relation to treatment for Hepatitis C, this is coordinated through the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme (NHCTP). Since 2015 the NHCTP has provided treatment to over 3700 patients beginning with those most in critical need. The National Service Plan 2019 is committed to ensuring that treatment is offered to patients with Hepatitis C in line with the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme's goal of eliminating Hepatitis C by 2026.

The Programme's current focus is to seek and treat the harder to reach client groups. In this regard the programme has commenced the extension of hepatitis C treatment away from the traditional based healthcare which is hospital based to a number of HSE Addiction Treatment Centres. Initial outcomes from those programmes are extremely positive with each patient engaging fully with their treatment and for those who have completed their treatment they have each received a sustained virological response i.e. a cure. Additionally, the programme is planning a further extension of treatment availability within the community setting outside of Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) clinics. To date there are 8 sites within HSE Addiction Treatment Centres providing treatment for Hepatitis C

The approach towards individuals who have Hepatitis C and who are in receipt of OST is coordinated through the National Hepatitis C Clinical Advisory Group, overseen by the National Hepatitis C Programme Advisory Group. They are continuing to prioritise treatment of individuals attending Addiction services for OST.



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 National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme 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 2016-2026 is underway. The refresh is building on progress made since 2014 and will be completed in Q4 2019.

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

Yours sincerely,



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Dr. Eamon Keenan  
National Clinical Lead – HSE Addiction Services