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15 October 2019

Deputy Louise O'Reilly
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Refs 40950/19, 40951/19 and 40952/19

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

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

To ask the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 463 to 466 of 2 July 2019, his views on the stated response time of a matter of hours in view of the finding in a document (details supplied).

To ask the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 463 to 466 of 2 July 2019, if a matter of hours would ensure that a baby would get the critical therapeutic hypothermia care they need for the treatment to be effective (details supplied).

To ask the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 463, 464, 465 and 466 of 2 July 2019, his views on whether time is a huge factor for treatment and whether medical outcomes would improve if an ambulance from a more local depot was dispatched to carry out the transfer (details supplied).

Response:

When the diagnosis of Neonatal Encephalopathy is made at a local hospital, passive cooling is commenced. This passive cooling treatment commences well within the 6 hour therapeutic limit. While the passive cooling treatment is in progress, the transport is called and arrives to continue with the cooling treatment and the transfer to the tertiary centre. Treatment time is not lost.

The transport is undertaken by the National Neonatal Transport Programme. This is a highly specialized service with highly trained skilled neonatal personnel. The transport is conducted by a transport neonatal consultant, neonatal registrar and neonatal nurse. In addition to their skills, this team is very experienced and carries out over 700 transports annually. An ambulance service from a more local depot would not have this level of expertise.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Grace Turner
General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme