



1st October 2019

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

PQ: 37744/19

To ask the Minister for Health the planned phased increase in the availability of buprenorphine and naloxone treatment as an alternative treatment for the identified cohorts of patients for whom methadone treatment is not suitable as set out in the National Drugs Strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Curran,

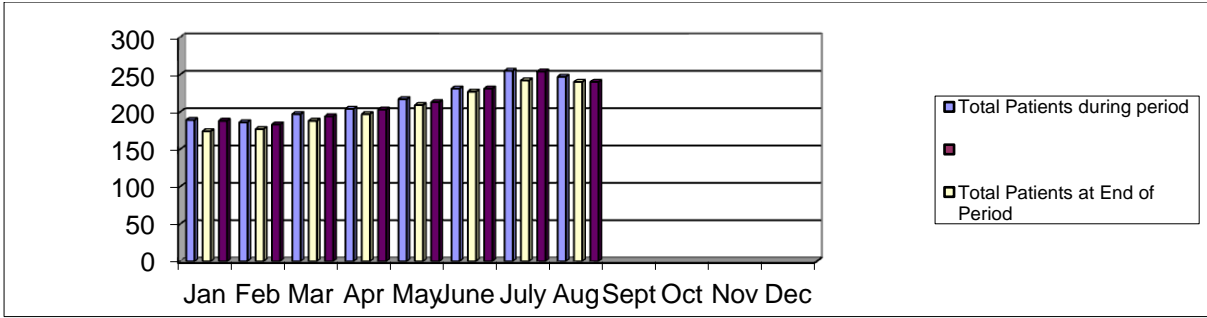
The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

The provision of Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) continues to be a cornerstone of the response to Opioid Dependence and is a core element of the Harm Reduction approach advocated for in our National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy, 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery'.

While methadone treatment is the predominant modality used in OST, since the introduction of legislation in late 2017 and the price agreement reached in 2018, the number of patients in receipt of Suboxone (buprenorphine/naloxone) has been steadily increasing in line with the commitment of a phased increase as outlined in the strategy. The phased increase started with the prescribing of buprenorphine/naloxone by trained Doctors working in HSE Addiction services outside the Dublin region. This was then extended to all trained Doctors working in HSE Addiction services nationally and all trained level II GPs working in Community practice. This phased approach has ensured that buprenorphine/naloxone is now available nationally for the identified cohort of patients.

The number of individuals in receipt of buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone) has increased steadily in 2019 from 177 at the end of December 2018 to 240 at the end of August 2019 as indicated by the graph below





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

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Eamon Keenan
National Clinical Lead – HSE Addiction Services