



Brendan Ryan, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

8th October, 2019

PQ: 38269/19

To ask the Minister for Health the criteria in relation to emergency medical cards; the extent to which a person must be sick; the way in which such an assessment is made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Brendan Ryan

Dear Deputy Ryan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 38269/19), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Medical Card eligibility is primarily based on an assessment of means and is not granted on the basis of any particular condition, of itself, (except in limited cases: e.g. Children under 18 years with a cancer diagnosis; persons affected by drug Thalidomide; Symphysiotomy survivors).

It should be noted that the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility (Sep 2014)¹, included the following:

- It is neither feasible nor desirable to list medical conditions in priority order for Medical Card eligibility
- In the context of finite resources, the current system is not without its merits for the great majority
- Financial hardship or means testing should remain the main criteria [for eligibility]

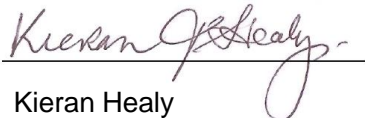
The Expert Panel also recommended the incorporation of a Strategic Clinical Advisory Group into the Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service [which includes the National Medical Card Unit (NMCU)] governance structure, with broad and experienced clinical, lay and administrative representation and access to expert opinions when required. It was the view of the Expert Panel that this was required in

order to give clinical oversight and guidance to the operation of a more compassionate and trusted Medical Card system, which could strive to ensure that the relatively small percentage of cases requiring the recognition of the burden of a medical condition(s) over and above financial hardship can be accommodated.

As part of the application process for Medical Card eligibility, applicants are invited to provide comprehensive information in relation to the costs associated with any illness and the care needs of the applicant and/or any dependents. In the event that an applicant's means are above the financial threshold for the grant of Medical Card eligibility, other factors outlined in the application in relation to the burden of illness are taken into consideration and eligibility may be granted where it is deemed appropriate to exercise discretion because of the undue burden on the applicant and /or any dependents.

Persons who are deemed by their medical practitioner to have a terminal medical condition (a prognosis of less than 12 months to live) and are receiving end-of-life treatment are not required to furnish information for a mean test assessment. Eligibility granted to persons in such circumstances is not reviewed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kieran Healy", written over a horizontal line.

Kieran Healy
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service