

Deputy David Cullinane
Sinn Féin
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10th September 2020

Re. PQ 17878/20: To ask the Minister for Health the number of referrals for all cancers to acute hospitals for the first six months of 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) tracks **electronic** GP referrals to Rapid Access Clinics (Breast, Lung, Prostate and pigmented lesion clinics) in the eight cancer centres and the satellite clinic in Letterkenny and holds this data for 2019 and 2020 only. It is important to note that these referrals relate to patients with a suspicion of cancer. Referrals may only be triaged as urgent or non-urgent at hospital level.

Month	2019	2020
Jan	3,737	4,031
Feb	3,504	3,533
Mar	3,575	2,290
Apr	3,290	2,446
May	3,581	3,400
Jun	2,898	3,707
Jul	3,172	3,940
Year to Date	23,757	23,347

Table 1 – Total GP e-Referrals across the eight cancer centres and Letterkenny for symptomatic breast disease clinics, rapid access lung and rapid access prostate clinics by month for 2019 and 2020

The data presented above describes the number of electronic GP referrals sent via Healthlink¹ as opposed to the number of new patients actually attending each of the rapid assessment cancer clinics. Not all GP referrals are made electronically nor is it possible to attribute differences in numbers to actual referrals as the difference may well be due to an increased number of GPs using the system in the timeframe requested rather than an actual increase in referrals. Lastly, it is to be noted that data across all rapid assessment services will be subject to seasonal variation.

Yours sincerely



Professor Risteárd Ó Laoide
National Director
National Cancer Control Programme

¹ The number of e-referrals sent to each of the Rapid Access Cancer and Symptomatic Breast Disease clinics is reported by Healthlink. Only summary counts are reported to the NCCP and no patient level data is shared between Healthlink and NCCP.