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24th November 2020

Deputy Catherine Murphy T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2
E: catherine.murphy@oireachtas.ie

Re: PQ 34856/20 – Opening hours of the eye emergency department, Mater Hospital

“To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the opening hours of the eye emergency department at the Mater Hospital from the current hours of 8:00am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday to 8:00am to 9:00pm Monday to Fridays and from 9:00am to 6:00pm on Saturdays.”

Dear Deputy Murphy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question seeking the estimated cost of increasing the opening hours of the eye emergency department at the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, which has been referred to the Ireland East Hospital Group for direct response.

I have had this matter examined and am advised that the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital's eye emergency department operates a 24 hour eye emergency system. This is staffed fully Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm and on Saturday mornings from 8am to 2pm. The Mater Misericordiae University Hospital's eye department staff these hours and it is manned by the on call eye team during out of hours.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the eye emergency department, like many other eye emergency departments, moved from a walk in service to a book in advance service, to provide a safe environment for patients and for staff. While this has necessitated some changes internally, it has proved successful in providing an accurate triage system by way of email or phone appointment. When an email or phone referral is received the patients are triaged by senior nursing and medical staff and they are giving an appointment in the eye emergency department.

The Mater Misericordiae University Hospital feel that this current system is the most efficient and safest way to deliver the service, while cognisant of cost and value for the HSE. Should the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital wish to extend the hours of the eye emergency department, they would need to increase the scheduled hours of medical, nursing and administrative staff to reflect the increase in availability.



Calculated cost

Staffing estimate for an extra 5 hours Mon - Fri and 4 hours on a Saturday of full service would be:

Extra time required of $5 \times 5 + 4 \times 1$ (Saturday) = 25 regular hours + 4 OT hours = (0.8 WTE)

2 medical staff (1 senior / 1 trainee)

2 Grade 4 Admin

1 CNS

2 Staff Nurse

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Paul Gallagher
Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery