



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

23rd October 2020

PQ Number: 30539/20

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the locations in which laboratory testing of Covid-19 samples are taking place in the State; the number of tests analysed by each laboratory in September 2020; if laboratories are using qualified scientists with medical scientific qualifications to do this analysis; if so, the reason other suitably qualified scientists are not employed for this work; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
-Éamon Ó Cuív

Request Type: Direct Written Response to eamon.ocuiv@oireachtas.ie with a copy to PQuestions@hse.ie.

Dear Deputy O'Cuiv

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

A list of the laboratories currently submitting tests to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre to read COVID-19 tests is attached with the testing volumes to September 2020. The laboratories fall under 3 general headings.

- Public/community hospitals: These laboratories provide testing facilities as part of the overall services of each site out of overall funding and are not funded on a per test basis.
- Private hospitals: These services are not funded by the HSE and we have no sight of the costs.
- Community diagnostic Laboratories; these laboratories primarily undertake the general population testing and are a mix of public and commercial laboratories.

The attached table lists all of the laboratories currently undertaking COVID testing and their addresses. The vast majority of laboratories are public hospital laboratories or publicly funded laboratories for COVID PCR testing.

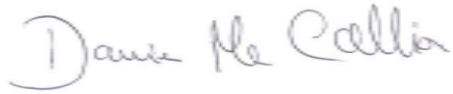
HSE SARS-CoV-2 testing laboratories in Ireland operate to the highest standards. They are using qualified scientists with medical scientific qualifications where appropriate. However, there is a chronic shortage of Medical Scientists in the country. As such, many laboratories will also employ other suitably qualified scientists to undertake laboratory work.

The HSE has sanctioned additional laboratory staff for our public laboratories and these positions are currently being filled in our laboratories to support COVID testing. These are being filled by the hospitals in line with normal HSE practices for filling laboratory positions.

All laboratories operate to a quality management system. The nature of the testing being undertaken in the laboratory determines the skill-mix required in that laboratory. A robust quality management system also ensures that standard operating procedures are in place and staff are appropriately trained for the relevant task.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien McCallion". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Damien McCallion
National Director, HSE