

CC/BL/MD

Email: pqmidwestacute@hse.ie19th October 2020Mr Brian Leddin TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 21280/20

*** To ask the Minister for Health the position regarding waiting times and numbers attending adult outpatient clinics for type 1 and type 2 diabetes in University Hospital Limerick. -Brian Leddin**

RE: PQ 21281/20

*** To ask the Minister for Health the number of adult diabetes outpatient appointments being offered in University Hospital Limerick; and if telephone or video consultations are available - Brian Leddin. -Brian Leddin**

RE: PQ 21282/20

*** To ask the Minister for Health the progress on implementing the recommendations of the National Survey of Diabetes Care Delivery in Acute Hospitals 2018 in University Hospital Limerick to provide dietitians and diabetes nurse specialists in the adult diabetes service in the hospital and to offer diabetes self-management education and insulin pump therapy to adults with type 1 diabetes in the mid-west region - Brian Leddin.**

Dear Deputy Leddin,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I apologise for the delay in so doing.

UL Hospitals Group recognises the need for additional resources within our adult diabetic services. This issue is a core focus for UL Hospitals Group and we are committed to improving the service for our patients. Developing services around insulin pump therapy and structured education in particular require us to fill further specialist posts, including nursing and dietitian posts.

While there is a specialist dietitian working within our paediatric diabetes patients, there is currently no specialist dietitian in post for adults with Type 1 Diabetes. Patients are seen by a ward dietitian as



in-patients but there is no specialist dietetic care or outpatient appointments for adult diabetes patients in UHL.

Currently, the adult service in UHL is unable to commence adult patients on insulin pumps due to service demands and funding issues. We do, however, accept patients established on pumps from elsewhere and these patients are managed under the care of a consultant endocrinologist. The largest group of these patients are those who have transferred from the paediatric diabetes service in UHL. All of our insulin pump patients are seen in UHL.

I can advise that a second consultant endocrinologist took up post on 1st October 2020 and a proposal to fill a third post has now gone to the HSE nationally for approval.

To develop both a structured education programme and an insulin pump therapy service for new adult patients would require the following additional staff:

- 1 Endocrinologist
- 4 Specialist Dietitians
- 1 Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- 1 Diabetes Nurse Specialist
- 2 administrative support

Once these posts are filled we can commence the necessary staff training and education to support the establishment in UL Hospitals Group of the structured education programme and the insulin pump starts.

We are actively seeking to fill one additional dietitian post in the coming weeks in the context of winter funding and the additional bed capacity we expect to open at UHL before the end of this year.

We will continue to engage in the budgetary process nationally to advance these posts and development of these services.

In 2019, there were 3,107 attendances to our adult diabetes clinics. Waiting time for a routine diabetes appointment has increased significantly to approx. five years. However new patients may be triaged sooner on the basis of the clinical information that is provided by the referring physician.

Diabetes outpatient clinics have recommenced at UHL, at St John's Hospital and at Ennis Hospital. In line with the public health guidelines, we can see eight patients face-to-face per clinic with approximately 10 patients being seen virtually.

Prior to Covid-19 approximately 50-70 patients were seen at an outpatient clinic. Currently we see approximately eight patients in our face to face diabetes clinics with additional virtual clinics also running where we see approximately 10. A virtual clinic is one in which the patient and clinician

interact in real time, via a video or telephone. The numbers of patients who are seen virtually are restricted due to availability of clinical space, which has been under further pressure since the pandemic.

We are conscious that the unfortunate but necessary reduction of so much scheduled work has been difficult on our patients, especially those who had already been waiting a long time for their appointment.

A project to evaluate the outpatient service across UL Hospitals Group has been established. The project is in response to the public health emergency, including the requirement for social distancing, and growing waiting lists. The working group will provide recommendations and oversight on how best the OPD services can be organised and delivered. The project is expected to run until early 2021.

New referrals across all specialties are facilitated in order of clinical prioritisation and this is in line with the resumption of services across our Hospitals Group. However we recognise that the demands on our Group's diabetes service are significant

We are carefully scaling up services in line with the national public health guidance and in a manner which optimises patient care while minimising risks to patients, staff and the wider healthcare system.

Developing our diabetes services is a core focus for UL Hospitals Group and we are committed to improving the service for our patients.

I trust this clarifies the position, please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,


Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group