



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Rannan na nOspideil Ghearmhíochaine
Aonad 4A – Áras Dargan
An Ceantar Theas
An Bothar Mileata
Cill Mhaighneann
BÁC 8

Acute Operations
Health Service Executive
Unit 4A - The Dargan Building
Heuston South Quarter
Military Road
Kilmainham
Dublin 8.

5th January 2022

Deputy Pdraig Mac Lochlainn
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 59888/21 - To ask the Minister for Health the reason some hospitals across the State do not provide a post-mortem service at weekends and bank holidays; and if his attention has been drawn to the distress that this practice can cause to bereaved families and the serious challenges to some families in relation to the adherence to their religion and faith

Dear Deputy Mac Lochlainn,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The provision of post-mortem services is related to a number of factors which include the availability of qualified and trained Consultant Histopathologists, the availability of Anatomical Pathological Technicians to assist in the post mortem and the demand / requirement for such services. You may be aware that some hospitals do not provide post mortem services.

The reduction in the availability of post mortem services at weekends is usually due to the reduced requirement for such services and / the need to schedule relevant staff to undertake the post mortem at times of most need. Although a hospital may have a number of Consultant Histopathologist, some of these Consultants may not be involved in post mortem services. In addition, due to capacity issues with APTs, these are typically not rostered at weekends.

We apologize if this situation can cause distress to families. In most cases, where a post mortem is requested for a patient who died over the weekend, these post mortems will be scheduled first on the next working day. Consultant Histopathologists are in on-going communication with families and Corners to ensure they are aware of when the post mortem will be completed.

The HSE makes a range of information available to families where a loved one may require a post mortem (see

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/3/acutehospitals/hospitals/cavanmonaghan/information-on-post-mortems.pdf>).

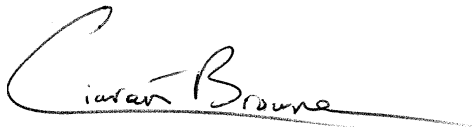
The HSE Standards for Post Mortems

(<https://www.lenus.ie/bitstream/handle/10147/628088/Standards%20and%20recommended%20practices%20for%20post%20mortem%20examination%20services.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)

details the expected communication with families about the process, timelines and outcomes of the post mortem process.

I wish to apologize for the delay in responding to you on this question.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ciaran Browne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ciaran Browne
Acute Operations - HSE