



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

09th February 2021

Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

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.

PQ 4872/21*

To ask the Minister for Health the number of general practitioner referrals made to see a consultant for each month in 2020; the average per month in 2018 and 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 4873/21*

To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients seen by a consultant each month in 2020; the average per month for 2018 and 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 5019/21* *To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients who saw a consultant in 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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.

Response:

2020 saw a significant reduction in planned scheduled care activity volumes across acute hospital services including outpatients, inpatient and day case procedures due to the impact of COVID 19. This reduction in activity was aligned to the National Action Plan on COVID 19 and the Clinical Guidance that was developed as part of the response to the pandemic. During 2020 scheduled care activities mainly focused on urgent and time critical access with routine/non-time dependent scheduled care services postponed or severely curtailed. This was to provide capacity for COVID

inpatients, for staff to be redeployed for training in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), COVID ward care and to support Critical Care surge delivery. Services that were postponed included day case services, elective surgeries and outpatient appointments. Where services could not be safely postponed, they were delivered after case by case assessment either in the base hospital or relocated to another appropriate environment. Essential outpatient appointments were delivered, where possible, using a digital health solution. The overall impact has been an increase in patients awaiting inpatient and day-case admissions as well as outpatient appointments.

In the latter part of 2020, as services adapted to new workflows and processes associated with providing care within a COVID environment, the number of patients treated began to increase. The number of patients being treated in the scheduled care pathway in the early part of 2021 has been affected by the latest surge in COVID-19 and the requirement to prioritise access for time – urgent care.

Regarding the query of the number of patients who saw a consultant the HSE is unable to provide data by individual Consultant, in this instance we have provided you with data relating to numbers of patients (new and return) who attended outpatients per month nationally for the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. Of note attendances in previous years have been impacted by adverse weather events, industrial action and the global pandemic COVID - 19 in 2020.

The data provided is collected by the HSE Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) in Appendix 1 below.

Significant funding has been identified through the 2021 estimates process to support access to care. The HSE is working with Hospital Groups to ensure that available additional funding in 2021 is targeted at access to care for patients where care delivery has been affected by the Pandemic.

I trust that this answers your questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Kidd', written in a cursive style.

Robert Kidd
Assistant National Director
Acute Operations

Appendix 1: Numbers of Patients (New and Return) who Attended Outpatient Appointments by Month in 2018, 2019 and 2020

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2018	293,748	262,390	256,168	277,232	309,196	265,601	282,136	284,124	273,737	305,535	303,758	223,423	3,337,048
2019	292,343	247,502	277,304	285,730	306,547	257,245	299,812	271,277	287,713	304,502	290,726	234,218	3,354,919
2020	300,361	274,383	212,502	169,634	193,853	231,768	267,646	247,705	292,408	268,767	288,986	243,993	2,992,006

Data Source: Business Intelligence Unit (BIU)