

Brian Stanley TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2

9th March 2021

PQ - To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide details of the way the Covid vaccines are distributed to general practitioners such as by county or by surgery; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a number of surgeries have not yet received a delivery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Brian Stanley

Deputy Stanley,

I refer to your recent representation which was passed to the HSE for response.

Ireland's strategy is to distribute all COVID-19 vaccines that we receive, subject to ensuring availability of the second dose. At the beginning of last week, Ireland had received approximately 520,000 vaccine doses and by the end of the week approximately 500,000 doses were administered, a measure of the programme's efficiency. Vaccines continue to be administered very quickly after their arrival into the country. At the moment, vaccine administration is limited only by the supply of approved vaccines and that is dependent on manufacturers meeting their supply commitments.

As with all Vaccine Administration Sites, consumables (needles, syringes, sharps bin etc.) are delivered separately to vaccines. Planning is predicated on the approach that consumables will be delivered in advance of the vaccine delivery and every effort is made to ensure that this is the case. However, I am aware of a small number of incidents where consumables have not arrived in advance of the vaccine delivery.

In relation to General Practitioners, the position is that at the conclusion of the first phase rollout of the programme last weekend, the HSE has confirmed that the majority of patients aged 85 years and over have received their first dose of the vaccine as scheduled. GPs have also begun administration of vaccine to people aged 80-84. In total over 1,300 GP practices, representing in excess of 3000 GPs and their Practice Teams have delivered over 90,000 vaccines by last weekend and a further 37,000 vaccines being distributed this week (w/c 8 March). The programme has also involved a number of large scale GP clinics, which have taken place in the Helix DCU, MTU in Cork and Merlin Park Galway with over 1,500 over 85's receiving the vaccine at these locations.

There are a very small number of practices, less than 30, who are due to receive first delivery this week week for their over 85s and it is also intended to commence the vaccination of those who are homebound as arrangements have been put in place in conjunction with GP's, local community teams and the National Ambulance Service and will commence this week and also patients in our acute hospitals. The HSE has acknowledge that there were problems with communication with GPs generally and that some issues have arisen with the distribution of vaccines to some GP Practices over the last week and we wish to apologise to GP practices, their teams and the patients who may have been impacted by these.

As is well known, the vaccination programme is limited internationally by the supply of vaccine and our programme to date has ensured that all available vaccine is distributed and administered as quickly as possible. The supply required for the completion of the programme by mid-May remains on target. However, due to a re-profiling of the Moderna vaccine delivery schedule, the total vaccine doses available for distribution in the coming weeks is now slightly less. The available vaccine supply is approximately 15% less than the required amount to meet the total over-80 cohort. This means GPs may not receive the total order for these coming weeks but, in all instances, GPs will be advised on the amounts they will receive and any shortfall in vaccine for the over-80 age

group will be allocated in the next order and so on through March with a significant ramp-up in vaccine delivery in April as increased supplies arrive in Ireland. Unfortunately, these supply issues are outside of our control. However, if any additional supply becomes available, this will be provided to General Practitioners at the earliest opportunity. Importantly, we expect that the totality of the over-70s programme will be completed within the original timeframe of mid-May.

Regards



National Director
Community Strategy & Planning