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30th March 2021

Deputy Kelly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 14076/21: To ask the Minister for Health if there are hospitals which have a significantly higher rate of caesarean section deliveries than the national average; and if so, the steps the HSE or HIQA are conducting to ascertain the reason for this.

Dear Deputy Kelly,

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 have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Caesarean section rates are collected for each of the 19 Maternity Units at both local and national level, with these rates available in the annual Irish Maternity Indicator System (IMIS) reports.

A link to the 2019 IMIS report is set out below, with the 2020 IMIS Report due to be published in Q2 2021.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/acute-hospitals-division/woman-infants/national-reports-on-womens-health/imis-national-report-2019.pdf>

As set out in the 2019 Report, there was considerable variation in caesarean rates across the 19 maternity units in 2019 with rates ranging from approximately 27% to 41%. In terms of the increasing rates and variation across hospitals, research indicates that Ireland is largely similar to other jurisdictions.

The determinants of caesarean rates in individual hospital are many and would include patient demographics, multiple pregnancy rates, clinical risk profile of patients and professional and patient preference.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary-Jo Biggs'.

Mary-Jo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme