



Colm Burke TD
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

7th April 2021

PQ 14440/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if he will consider putting in place additional supports for those with type 1 diabetes to afford the cost of a flash glucose meter in view of the fact that there are substantial costs associated with this equipment which is essential for the management of blood glucose; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Colm Burke”

Dear Deputy Burke,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 14440/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

For those living with diabetes, monitoring glucose levels daily is the key to avoiding complications. It is recommended that people on insulin test a minimum of 4 times per day. This level of frequent testing using traditional finger pricking devices can be painful, inconvenient and difficult to achieve as people go about their daily life.

Flash glucose monitoring ('FreeStyle Libre') is carried out via a small sensor that is worn on the upper arm. It measures interstitial fluid glucose levels every minute, with the data stored at intervals of 15 minutes for up to 8 hours. These values can be accessed any time by scanning with a reader or mobile phone. The clinical data gathered by these devices can be uploaded to a secure database which the healthcare provider can then access to inform their assessment and facilitate virtual/ remote reviews.

Use of Free Style Libre (FSL) is now the standard of care in most European countries and has been shown to result in improved blood sugar control and a reduction in hospital admissions due to episodes of severe hypoglycaemia and diabetic ketoacidosis. Furthermore, a recent study completed by Diabetes Ireland explored the 'Users experiences of Flash Glucose Monitoring on daily life experiences' and demonstrates the overwhelmingly positive feedback of FSL users with re-occurring themes emerging such as: 'makes life easier'; 'improves control'; and 'empowers individuals to be more proactive and confident in their diabetes management'.

In 2018, in line with the recommendations of the Health Technology Assessment Group (HTAG), FSL device was made available on an individualised basis only to children and young adults with type one diabetes (age 4-21 years) through the Primary Care Reimbursement Scheme (PCRS). Those living with diabetes who are not eligible or are not approved to receive reimbursement support through the exceptional circumstances process, to

receive FSL must either self-fund the device (at great expense) or continue to use finger pricking devices, test strips and metres. The reduction in strip usage anticipated in approved patients for this product has not materialised.

In line with international best practice, the National Clinical Programme for Diabetes (NCP Diabetes) and the RCPI Diabetes Clinical Advisory Group strongly support and will continue to work towards a broadening of the criteria for coverage by PCRS of FSL to all individuals living with type 1 diabetes in Ireland. NCP Diabetes continues to work with PCRS to identify mechanisms to progress this issue.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TJ Dunford', is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

TJ Dunford

Head of Operations; Primary Care.
Community Operations.