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Deputy Verona Murphy
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ16434 To ask the Minister for Health the steps actively being taken to provide a much improved testing system for Lyme disease here to ensure early diagnosis of the debilitating disease and to prevent misdiagnosis and late diagnosis which is resulting in the disease taking 12 months in some cases to diagnose; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

HPSC is Ireland's specialist agency for the surveillance of infectious diseases. Disease surveillance involves the collection, analysis and understanding of information about diseases.

HPSC does not diagnose or treat patients so can only provide two types of information for the general public on Lyme disease:

1. Factsheets for the general public

HPSC produces factsheets for the general public on infectious diseases. Factsheets for the general public are available for Lyme disease and for how doctors test for Lyme.

2. Disease surveillance reports

Production of disease surveillance reports on Lyme disease involves the ongoing collection of information from people diagnosed with a severe form of Lyme disease which affects the nervous system, called neuroborreliosis. This information is used to monitor the population's health in relation to Lyme disease and to develop health messages to help the population prevent Lyme disease. Disease surveillance reports on Lyme disease are published annually and quarterly. The Lyme disease surveillance reports are available on the HPSC website.

HPSC does not provide advice to individuals relating to:

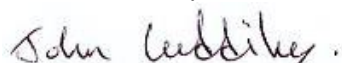
- laboratory tests for Lyme disease
- treatment of Lyme disease
- which doctors (in Ireland or abroad) a patient should consult in the case of suspected Lyme disease.
- providing any form of clinical second opinion on your medical condition. If you feel that you want referral for a second opinion, this option should be discussed with your GP or Hospital Consultant.

In relation to GPs' knowledge of Lyme disease, there is a large amount of documentation and information on the HPSC website section on Lyme disease <<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vectorborne/lymedisease/>>. Specifically there are sections for the general public <<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vectorborne/lymedisease/informationforthepublic/>> and health professionals <<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vectorborne/lymedisease/informationforhealthcareprofessionals/>>. In the section for health professionals there are specific factsheets and support tools for clinicians (particularly GPs), along with the report of the HSE-HPSC's Lyme Borreliosis Subcommittee, Primary Prevention and Surveillance of Lyme Borreliosis in Ireland published in 2019 <<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vectorborne/lymedisease/informationforhealthcareprofessionals/Primary%20Prevention%20and%20Surveillance%20of%20Lyme%20Borreliosis%20in%20Ireland.pdf>>. This Subcommittee was tasked with producing a report that would address the following:

1. To raise awareness in Ireland of Lyme borreliosis amongst clinicians and the general public
2. To identify and highlight best international practice in awareness raising about Lyme borreliosis for the general public
3. To develop policies of primary prevention of Lyme borreliosis in Ireland based on best international evidence
4. To explore ways in which to improve surveillance of neuroborreliosis in Ireland
5. To develop strategies to raise awareness among the general public particularly in relation to areas with higher tick populations.

If you require any further information or clarification please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,



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