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Deputy Noel Grealish, TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 16614/21

To ask the Minister for Health the efforts he has made to introduce a safer method of monitoring diabetes patients who are an at-risk category during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dear Deputy Grealish,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have consulted with the National Clinical Programme for Diabetes on your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position.

Because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, many hospital and community services have transformed the way they are delivering diabetes care, to enhance engagement with all patients. Most diabetes services, including general practice, are offering telephone and virtual consultations as well as face-to-face appointments, when required. In some areas, clinics that would have been delivered in the hospital setting are now being delivered in the community, closer to the patient's home. Dietitians and nurses who deliver diabetes self-management education are preparing for this education to be made available virtually rather than in a face-to-face group setting. These measures have been employed to maintain diabetes service delivery and to protect the health of patients living with diabetes, as well as healthcare professionals during this global pandemic.

Some key enablers have been implemented nationally to facilitate virtual diabetes reviews include:


- The HSE has approved and made available the following telehealth solutions for delivery of virtual clinics, virtual group education or multidisciplinary team meetings: Attend Anywhere; Microsoft Teams; WhatsApp; Cisco WebX.
- The Medtronic CareLink System has been approved for use in all HSE acute hospitals. This system is a cloud-based IT system used by paediatric and adult diabetes services. It allows the patient's healthcare provider to access data gathered by a compatible Medtronic device (e.g. Insulin Pumps and Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM) machines). The use of this system facilitates and enhances remote and virtual patient reviews for patient using it.

- A similar electronic system (called LibreView) is available for remote review of patient data collected using the Freestyle Libre flash glucose monitoring sensor. At present, this technology is available (through PCERS) for patients between the ages of 4 and 21 years.

As the number of patients with COVID-19 has stabilised, with more people vaccinated, many GPs, hospital and community diabetes services are seeing increasing numbers of patients face-to-face in their clinics. Staying connected with the healthcare providers for diabetes is essential and staff are adept at filtering patients who can be safely managed in the community with virtual appointments and selecting out those who will benefit most from in-person review. It is important that people with diabetes do not ignore or delay seeking medical treatment when necessary. Patients should be encouraged to contact their GP, local pharmacy or diabetes specialist team as appropriate to discuss any issues, signs or symptoms that they may be concerned about as early intervention can prevent serious complications.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Anne Horgan
General Manager