

CC/MB/MC

Email: pqmidwestacute@hse.ie

29th November 2021

Mr Martin Browne TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 55610/21, PQ 55611/21, PQ 55608/21, PQ 55609/21

*** To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients referred to the medical assessment unit University Hospital Limerick in each month to date in 2021. - Martin Browne**

***To ask the Minister for Health the number of appointments at the medical assessment unit in Nenagh, County Tipperary that were cancelled or referred elsewhere on the days when the unit was closed on dates in May, June, July and September 2021. - Martin Browne**

***To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients referred to the medical assessment unit in Ennis General Hospital in each month to date in 2021. - Martin Browne**

*** To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients referred to the medical assessment unit in St. John's Hospital, Limerick in each month to date in 2021. - Martin Browne**

Dear Deputy Browne,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Medical Assessment Units provide diagnosis and treatment for patients referred with medical conditions including chest infections, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), pneumonia, urinary tract infections, fainting episodes, clots in the leg, anaemia, or non-acute cardiac problems.

GPs—or the ED— initially assess and refer patients for appointments on the same day or the following day. The multidisciplinary teams at our MAUs work towards same-day diagnosis, treatment and discharge, and aim to see all patients within an hour of arrival.

In line with our escalation plan, the Medical Assessment Unit at University Hospital Limerick has been operating as a medical ED since March 2020, stable medical and surgical patients in the non-Covid stream are directed to the Medical Assessment Unit and Surgical Assessment Unit in UHL. Those non-Covid patients who must remain in the ED are completely separated from patients in the Covid/query Covid pathway and there is no crossover of staff.

The below table outlines the number of patients who were triaged in the Emergency Department and referred to the Medical Assessment Unit/Medical ED at UHL this year:

Month	Patients referred
January	439
February	452
March	610
April	652
May	788
June	761
July	755
August	565
September	488
October	455

The MAU in Nenagh Hospital was closed for a total of 12 days this year due to staff shortages. The decision to close the MAU in Nenagh Hospital was taken in order to ensure patient safety and following extensive efforts to secure locum cover for the MAU on those dates. While the Nenagh unit was closed, we encouraged local GPs and out-of-hours doctors to instead refer appropriate patients to the MAUs at St John's Hospitals and Ennis.

Service disruptions in our Medical Assessment Units are communicated to GPs, who are responsible for the majority of referrals to our MAUs. GPs have access to MAU slots in Nenagh, Ennis, and St John's through our Bed Bureau. Review patients are contacted directly by staff in the MAU in Nenagh Hospital and are offered alternative appointments as required. Between May 4th and September 9th 2021, a total of 8 review patients had their appointments rescheduled because of these closures.

The Nenagh MAU currently has capacity to see six patients per day and I can advise that all six appointment slots are offered daily. It is likely that the number of appointment slots available will increase when a full time registrar is recruited and when the National Consultant Appointments Advisory Committee provides approval for a permanent consultant post.

In relation to Ennis MAU, a funding allocation of €286,000 from the National Treatment Purchase Fund awarded in December 2020 has allowed for the significant expansion of services provided at the MAU in Ennis Hospital.

The expansion of the MAU and recruitment of new staff has allowed us to increase weekly slots to 28 new patients per day and 18 new patients at weekends taking effect from November 1st, 2021. Once additional personnel are in place, we will be in a position to increase the number of weekly slots in the MAU to 32 between Monday and Friday and 20 at the weekends in line with the allocation from the NTPF.

Please see below for a breakdown of the number of patients referred to the Medical Assessment Unit in Ennis Hospital for each month to date in 2021:

Month	Patients referred
January	634
February	643
March	709
April	686
May	223
June	422
July	535
August	517
September	571
October	593
November	388 (up to 18th November, 2021)

In addition, please see below for a breakdown of the number of patients referred to the Medical Assessment Unit in St John's Hospital, Limerick for each month to date in 2021:

Month	Patients referred
January	214
February	282
March	330
April	310
May	194
June	254
July	300
August	309
September	324

October	314
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Please note, the numbers referred to Medical Assessment Units in May and June were impacted due to the cyber-attack on HSE IT systems.

I trust this clarifies the position. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group