



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
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Deputy Mark Ward,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

29th November 2021

PQ Number: 56111/21

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if electroconvulsive therapy is carried out in public hospitals; if so, the number of patients that were treated this way and in which locations in each of the years 2017 to 2020 and to date in 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter - Mark Ward

Dear Deputy Ward,

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.

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), as defined by the Mental Health Commission, is a medical procedure in which an electric current is passed briefly through the brain via electrodes applied to the scalp to induce generalised seizure activity. The person receiving treatment is placed under general anaesthetic and muscle relaxants are given to prevent body spasms. The purpose of ECT is to treat specific types of major mental illnesses.

Section 59 of the Mental Health Act 2001 (the "2001 Act") as amended by the Mental Health (Amendment) Act 2015 (the "2015 Act"), obliges the Mental Health Commission to make rules providing for the use of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) on a patient. A "patient" under the 2001 Act (as amended) is construed in Section 14 and refers to a person to whom an admission (or renewal) order relates. The 2001 Act (as amended) provides that ECT may only be administered to a patient with the patient's written consent. The 2001 Act (as amended) also provides that where the patient is unable to give consent, ECT must be approved by the consultant psychiatrist responsible for the care and treatment of the patient and another consultant psychiatrist following referral of the matter to him/her by the first-mentioned psychiatrist.

The Mental Health Commission prepared Rules that came into force on 1st November 2006. An independent review of the Rules was carried out between September and December 2008 which involved extensive stakeholder consultation. The Rules were revised to take account of the recommendations arising from the review and the amended Rules came into effect on 1st January 2010. Following the implementation of the 2015 Act, ECT can only be administered to a patient without consent where it has been determined that the patient is unable to give consent to the treatment. ECT shall not be administered to a patient who is unwilling to give consent. The Rules have been revised to take into account the 2015 Act. The date of commencement of these Rules is 15th February 2016.



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Further information on the rules governing the use of ECT and the Mental Health's Commission Code of Practice on the Use of ECT for Voluntary Patients can be found at the following links:

<https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/Rules%20Governing%20the%20Use%20of%20Electro-Convulsive%20Therapy.pdf>

<https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/Code%20of%20Practice%20on%20the%20Use%20of%20Electro-Convulsive.pdf>

In relation to your request, this data is collected by the Mental Health Commission. Data pertaining to 2017 and 2018 can be found at the following link:

https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/ECTreport_060320.pdf

The activity report for 2019 can be found at:

<https://www.mhcirl.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/ECT-Activity-Report-2019.pdf>

Data for 2020 and YTD for 2021 is not yet published by the Mental Health Commission. Further information can be requested directly from the Mental Health Commission at the following email address: info@mhcirl.ie

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Ryan
Assistant National Director - Head of Operations
National Mental Health Service