

CC/DC/MD

Email: pqmidwestacute@hse.ie24th September 2021

Mr David Cullinane TD
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 41556/21

***To ask the Minister for Health if he will advise on a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane**

An ad hoc clinic was put in place by UHL to complete overdue Thyroid Ultrasounds ,to my knowledge there was over 900 people of the waiting list , these were completed at the weekends so extra resources were put into it , the follow up clinic was conducted in a timely manner , but after that the failings are quite clear. It appears to me that the ultrasounds were preformed , thus reducing waiting lists , all looking to reduce overall hospital waiting lists. If you were lucky enough not to need further investigations carried out the system would appear to be satisfactory. I however along with several more need to have a biopsy to test for cancer. I was told by my consultant on the 30th April 2021 that an agreement was in place between the public / private hospitals and I would be having my biopsy soon in a private hospital . I have since learned that Contracts for this arrangement were only signed off on the 20th July 2021. This was 3 months after I met the consultant. This is not acceptable, and I cannot understand why the final part of the process wasn't signed off until at least 12 weeks after the initial process began. Surely this is a specific project which should have a full set of processes in place prior to commencement. In my case the private / public arrangement clearly isn't working so maybe Government need to rethink this arrangement. I understand that waiting lists for all procedures are increasing by the day but to get as far as you need to be tested for cancer and waiting 12 weeks (and counting) for a biopsy is simply unacceptable.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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.

Between January and April 2021, the Department of Radiology at University Hospital Limerick ran designated clinics out-of-hours and weekend in order to see 836 outpatients for whom an ultrasound of the thyroid had been clinically indicated. Capacity for outpatient ultrasound at UHL is limited by the

volume of investigations required to assist patient flow, including inpatients and emergency presentations/admissions.

During the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, all outpatient imaging and procedures were suspended at UHL, exacerbating the waiting lists for both diagnostic thyroid ultrasounds and fine needle aspiration (biopsy) procedures in UHL.

As a result of the above ultrasound initiative, a total of 151 requests for fine needle aspiration were generated. The process of seeking the consent of these patients to continue to this next stage of their care under the National Treatment Fund commenced in April 2021 and is ongoing. To date, a total of 85 patients from this cohort have consented to have an FNA procedure and to be referred for same under an NTPF initiative to the Beacon Medical Group.

The negotiations between UL Hospitals Group and the Beacon Medical Group took a number of weeks to complete and a service level agreement was signed by the UL Hospitals Group on August 7th 2021.

The first patients on this FNA pathway are scheduled to have appointments with the Beacon in September 2021.

I trust this clarifies the position. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Colette Cowan
Group Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group