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Date: 23/09/2021

Deputy David Cullinane TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ No. 43137/21 & 43109/21

To ask the Minister for Health the steps being taken regarding the diagnosis and subsequent treatment of Lyme disease and to ensure that persons suffering with Lyme disease or chronic Lyme disease are being properly supported; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Response:

Lyme is a tick borne infection that occurs when recreational or occupation activities result in tick bites from an infected tick. It is relatively rare with estimations that a small proportion of ticks in Ireland are infected (<5%).

The infection is known to be endemic in certain locations and in these areas the GPs are very familiar with the most typical presentation which is a rash, often with a bull's eye appearance. More complicated cases require referral to infectious diseases clinics.

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for Infectious Disease, was established in 2020 and is developing a workforce strategy to establish a network of infectious diseases clinics nationally. The Infectious Disease clinics operating in the public hospital system support the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) guidelines regarding the diagnoses and treatment of Lyme. Many hospital laboratories have the capacity to do Lyme serology (ELISA) locally and where not, referral of samples to the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) occurs. Confirmatory testing (western blot; an analytical technique in molecular biology and immunogenetics to detect specific proteins in a sample of tissue) is referred to Porton Down which is the referral laboratory for the UK.

There are patients who have prolonged symptoms post Lyme diagnosis and treatment, or have persisting unexplained medical complaints. It is envisaged that the National Clinical Programme for Infectious Disease will adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to developing and establishing pathways of care to address this cohort of patients.

I trust this answers your question to your satisfaction.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emma Benton".

Emma Benton

General Manager

Acute Operations