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**Deputy Richard O Donoghue
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 8107/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of dental practitioners by county; and the number of same that accept medical card patients by county (It is obvious that many are opting out of the scheme, and is the Minister concerned over this, and what is his response to people with medical cards who cannot access such dental care? Can he make a statement on this?)

Dear Deputy O'Donoghue,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

Adult medical card holders have access to dental services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) through care provided by private dentists that hold DTSS contracts with the HSE.

There is no single census or count of all dentists that are providing either public or private clinical services in Ireland, nor is there a reliable estimate of the scale of practice, i.e. the WTE equivalent across all types of clinical practice - private, HSE, specialist/limited practice, Dental Hospitals etc.

The Dental Council has a register of all dentists who have the right to practice, but this should not be used as a proxy for the number practicing as it includes dentists in academia, non-clinical roles and those who are not practicing but are on the register. Also, the Dental Council does not gather any data from registrants about their practice arrangements. There is no register of dental practices in Ireland, unlike, for example, nursing homes that must register with HIQA, so it isn't possible to calculate the proportion of all dental practices that accept medical cards.

The number of dentists that hold HSE Dental Treatment Service Scheme contracts is not available by county as requested but is available by Local Health Office (LHO). The data is detailed in the attached Excel Sheet by LHO as at end January 2022. (Note: contractors who have resigned but are still serving their 3 months' notice period are included in the list as they are required to participate in the scheme for this period.) DTSS Claims are processed through the HSE's Primary Care Reimbursement Service. In any single month, just over 60% of these dentists make a DTSS claim.

The HSE is aware that some medical card holders have had difficulties accessing the service. Where access to a dentist is difficult, local HSE Dental Services assist patients who make enquires and make lists of DTSS contractors available to medical card holders. In exceptional circumstances, where eligible adults could not access a dentist through the DTSS, they have had emergency treatment provided directly by the HSE.

As well as assisting medical card holders, the HSE is working closely with the Department of Health in relation to the operation of the scheme, and addressing difficulties faced by some patients accessing services.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but if you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Green', written over a horizontal line.

Joseph Green
AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations