



8 March 2022

Deputy Duncan Smith
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ9877/22: To ask the Minister for Health the total annual spend on CervicalCheck in each of the years 2017 to 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

CervicalCheck plays an important role in preventing cervical cancer in Ireland. The number of women who developed cervical cancer fell by 7% year-on-year between 2010 and 2015. In the first ten years of the programme it provided almost 3.2 million cervical screening tests, and detected over 115,000 abnormalities (including 64,000 high-grade abnormalities), many of which could have developed into cervical cancer if not detected through screening.

However, there are limitations to screening, in that it will not lead to the detection of all cases of cervical cancer as the test used is neither specific nor sensitive enough. Screening will not find every abnormal cell change, and some rare cervical cancers will not be picked up at all. This is a limitation of all cancer screening programmes, not just in Ireland, but globally. Every cervical cancer screening programme will have cases of interval cancer, (i.e. people who are diagnosed with cancer after a previous negative screening test and before their next screening tests are due).

Primary HPV screening is available to women and people with a cervix aged 25-65 and offers a free cervical screening procedure (HPV cervical screening test) every three to five years. The test is performed by a GP, practice nurse, or clinic healthcare staff. CervicalCheck provides information on the programme; delivers the samples to the laboratory; processes the samples and makes recommendations and gives them to the participants and their sampletakers. For those who need it, there are colposcopy services and cytology and histology laboratory services available and commissioned by CervicalCheck.

The expenditure on the CervicalCheck programme in the years 2017-2020 is shown in the following table. The expenditure figure for 2021 is not yet available.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Expenditure (€million)	32.194	42.072	43.501	35.036

Pause in cervical screening in 2020

The CervicalCheck programme was paused during April, May and June 2020 on public health advice because of the situation with COVID-19. The 2020 expenditure figure above reflects this disruption of services.





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National Screening Service

We continue to ask that people do not attend their screening test appointment if they are unwell or self-isolating because they have symptoms of COVID-19. People should not attend either if they are a confirmed close contact of someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. The safety of our participants and all those involved in their care continues to be our highest priority at this time.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Fiona Murphy
Chief Executive
National Screening Service

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