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3rd February, 2022

Deputy Michael Moynihan
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Moynihan,

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

PQ Ref: 63419/21

To ask the Minister for Health the number of deaths from Covid-19 in nursing homes in 2020 and 2021; the number of deaths in each year involving patients with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Summary of surveillance data:

The information below provided is based on the number of COVID-19 deaths up to midnight 19th January 2022 occurring between 1st March 2020 and 31st December 2021 reported to the HPSC as having died due to COVID-19. This includes all confirmed COVID-19 deaths, where the date of death is known and the place of death is recorded as a nursing home. Further notification of COVID-19 deaths occurring between 1st March 2020 and 31st December 2021 may be reported in the future and this is due to the time required by coroners to assess each COVID-19 death.

In total, between 1st March 2020 and 31st December 2021, 5,621 persons were reported to HPSC as having died due to COVID-19. This includes all confirmed COVID-19 deaths, where the date of death is known. Of those 5,621 persons who died 1,699 (30.2%) persons were recorded as having died in a nursing home.

Table 1 provides details of the number of persons who were reported to HPSC as having died due to COVID-19, where place of death is recorded as a nursing home and dementia was recorded as either an underlying condition or was reported as a cause of death (in addition to COVID-19) on the death certificate as per General Register Office (GRO) data received by HPSC. These data pertain to deaths which occurred between 1st March 2020 and 31st December 2021.

Table 1: Number of persons who have been reported to HPSC as having died due to COVID-19, where place of death is recorded as a nursing home and dementia was recorded as either an underlying condition or was reported as a cause of death (in addition to COVID-19) on the death certificate as per

General Register Office (GRO) data received by HPSC and deaths occurred between 1st March 2020 and 31st December 2021.

	2020	2021	Total
No. COVID-19 Deaths	2049	3572	5621
No. of COVID-19 deaths where place of death is recorded as a nursing home.	783	916	1699
No. of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes where dementia was recorded on the Death Certificate as a cause of death as per GRO data or recorded as an underlying clinical condition in CIDR	327	355	682
% of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes where dementia was recorded on the Death Certificate as a cause of death as per GRO data or recorded as an underlying clinical condition in CIDR	41.8%	38.8%	40.1%

Technical Note:

Data Source:

1. Data on the number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths that occurred in nursing homes during 2020 and 2021 and data on underlying clinical conditions were extracted from the national Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting system (CIDR) on 20.01.2022 at 2:00pm and were correct at that time. Data may change in future reports as further review and validation are carried out.
2. Data reported on cause of death was extracted from the General Register Office (GRO) files of all registered deaths up to 20th January 2022 this includes all COVID-19 deaths which have been registered where COVID-19 and dementia are listed as a cause of death.

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) undertakes the surveillance of all notifiable infectious diseases in Ireland as outlined in the list of notifiable infectious diseases on the HPSC website at www.hpsc.ie. COVID-19 is a notifiable infectious disease in Ireland.

Under the 1981 infectious diseases regulations and subsequent amendments, it is mandatory for clinicians and clinical laboratories to notify any cases of COVID-19 to the regional Director of Public Health and then onwards to the HPSC for the collation of surveillance and epidemiological data on COVID-19. When COVID-19 cases are reported to HPSC, this information includes their outcomes, including death. The COVID-19 deaths reported from HPSC are based on these notifications and their outcomes as reported. COVID-19 deaths reported to Departments of Public Health by coroners are also reported to HPSC and included COVID-19 death totals.

The HPSC is also notified by the General Register Office (GRO) of all registered deaths from all causes on a daily basis, and this includes all COVID-19 deaths which have been registered. The COVID-19 registered deaths are reviewed on a daily basis and cross checked with deaths previously reported to HPSC and those not previously reported to HPSC are incorporated into the COVID-19 death total reported by HPSC.

The definition of a COVID-19 death currently used by HPSC (for surveillance purposes) is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 death classification and reporting guidance: https://www.who.int/classifications/icd/Guidelines_Cause_of_Death_COVID-19.pdf?ua=1

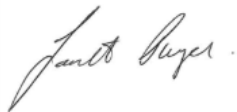
Dementia context:

The National Dementia Strategy, published in 2014, sets out a framework for the development of dementia supports and services in Ireland. The aim of the Strategy is to improve dementia care so that people with dementia can live well for as long as possible, can ultimately die with comfort and dignity, and can have services and supports delivered in the best possible way.

64,142 people in Ireland are living with dementia (HealthAtlas, 2020¹). This number is expected to rise to 150,131 by 2045 if current trends continue. The majority of people with dementia live in their own homes in the community. Exact figures on the number of people with dementia in long-term residential care is unknown, however it is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 people with dementia are residing in nursing homes in Ireland (Pierse and Pierse, 2020²).

International evidence shows that deaths caused by dementia are increasing. Matthews et al (2021³) examined this in more detail for Ireland in published research from 2021. Using CSO data, these authors found that there was a steady increase in deaths caused by dementia between 2013 (6% of state deaths) and 2018 (8%). Factors likely to contribute to this rise included longer life expectancy and increasing dementia prevalence, improved diagnosis, and better reporting of dementia on death notification forms. They conclude that it is highly likely that there is underreporting of deaths caused by dementia.

Regards,



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Services for Older People, Change & Innovation

¹ Figures generated by HSE's HealthAtlas in 2020, source figures available at <http://dementiopathways.ie/permacache/fdd/cf3/792/e223695cf65ee173882bdc394de3a8fc.pdf>

² Pierse, M. and Pierse, T. (2017) 'Prevalence of dementia' in O'Shea, E., Cahill, S. and Pierse, M. (eds) Developing and Implementing Dementia Policy in Ireland, Galway: National University of Ireland Galway

³ Matthews S, Pierse M, O'Brien Green S, Hurley E, Johnston BM, Normand C, May P. (2021). Dying and death in Ireland: what do we routinely measure, how can we improve? Dublin: Irish Hospice Foundation.