



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Priomhúil

Seomra 243, Ospidéal Dr Steevens,
Lána Steevens, Baile Átha Cliath 8.
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3rd June 2022

Deputy Verona Murphy,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 28734/22 – To ask the Minister for Health the plans that are in place by his Department to ensure the upskilling of relevant medical practitioners in relation to long-Covid care; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Verona Murphy

Dear Deputy Murphy,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions (PQ 28734/22), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Covid-19 is a new disease so information on it, its features, incidence and its course are still emerging. The natural history, clinical course and consequences of Covid-19 are still not completely understood. It is recognised that most people with Covid-19 return to baseline after acute infection, however a proportion will experience persistent and prolonged symptoms. There are many terms used to describe this post-acute sequelae, the most commonly used terms are Post Covid-19 Condition or Long Covid. Common symptoms include fatigue, shortness of breath and cognitive dysfunction which can have a significant impact on everyday functioning. Symptoms may be of new onset, following initial recovery from an acute Covid-19 episode, or may be persist from the initial illness. The condition usually presents with clusters of symptoms, often overlapping, which may change over time and can affect any system in the body.

The HSE has developed an interim Model of Care for Long COVID. This sets out how services and supports should be designed and delivered for patients who have ongoing symptoms in the Post-Acute phase of their illness and those who are experiencing Long COVID. This Model of Care aims to build on existing service provision, in addition to establishing new services across a number of health care settings including GP, community services and acute hospitals. There will be a phased implementation of this model of care with a focus on establishing, Post-Acute and Long COVID clinics as initial priority. This will involve expanding the resources at existing clinics where required and development of new clinics in line with the Model of Care.

As part of this programme the HSE has engaged with the Irish College of General Practitioners and other professional bodies representing allied health staff. Through this engagement it has identified the opportunity to provide further education and training in relation to the management of Long COVID, including when and how to refer patients to specialist services. The HSE is currently liaising with the Irish College of General Practitioners to plan information sessions regarding this.

At present, patients with persistent symptoms following COVID-19 infection may be followed up by their GP or in hospital settings as clinically appropriate. People in the community who are concerned about persistent



symptoms following Covid-19 should contact their GP in the first instance, who will be able to assess and sign post them towards the service most appropriate to their needs, including on ward referral to a Post-Acute or Long COVID clinic if appropriate.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Seán McArt'.

Seán McArt
General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations