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30th June 2022

Deputy Naughton
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 31694/22 To ask the Minister for Health the areas in which the two super-regional specialist centres for complex endometriosis care will be located; the areas in which the six hospital-based teams involved in the holistic treatment of endometriosis will be located; the make-up of each team and the staffing and services that will be provided at the specialist centres; the current services that are available to support patients with endometriosis in the west and north west; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Naughton

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.

The National Women's and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) invested initially to enhance endometriosis services in Tallaght University Hospital in 2021 to the total of €640,736. This investment included the allocation of funding for recruitment of essential health care professionals and allowed for some once-off costs such as small refurbishments of clinical space, purchase of equipment etc. A draft Framework for a National Endometriosis Service has been developed by NWIHP and is currently undergoing key stakeholder review. The proposed Framework is envisaged to roll out in a phased manner, with initial phase one investment seeing the establishment of two supra-regional endometriosis services; TUH and Cork University Maternity Hospital. These services will be designed to offer specialised care to complex cases of endometriosis.

In order to support the development of both supra-regional services, the Framework proposes that there be a named 'hub' within each hospital group. Each 'hub' will be positioned, through the allocation of additional resources, to provide interdisciplinary care to women experiencing endometriosis at a mild to moderate stage i.e. the cohort whose symptoms cannot be managed appropriately in primary care but who do not require the expense of highly specialist services within the supra-regional services. The exact location of each 'hub' is yet to be finalised.

The exact resource allocation will be determined further to completing stakeholder consultation and as stated previously, service development will roll out in a phased manner. However, the range of resources within the specialist services may include:

- Consultant gynaecologists with expertise in diagnosing and managing endometriosis, including advanced laparoscopic surgical skills;
- Consultant colorectal surgeon(s) with a specialist interest in endometriosis;
- Consultant urologist with a special interest in endometriosis;
- Consultant radiologist with expertise in gynaecological imaging of endometriosis
- Clinical nurse specialist(s) in the area of endometriosis;
- Allied health professional expertise in the areas of physiotherapy, dietetics, and psychology to promote and support patient empowerment and self-management; and
- Appropriate administrative and HCA supports.

The range of multi-disciplinary resources likely to be funded within each 'hub' service to support a holistic approach to care may include:

- Clinical nurse specialist
- Physiotherapy
- Dietetics
- Psychology
- Appropriate administrative and HCA supports

As regards the provision of services available to support women with endometriosis in the West and North West, the treatment of endometriosis is varied and individualised but can include pain medications, hormone treatment and surgical interventions. Many cases of endometriosis can be managed satisfactorily in primary care, while other women may require more advanced care in the acute setting. The training of medical specialists in the management and diagnosis of endometriosis forms an integral part of the specialist medical training programme provided by the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. All Obstetrician Gynaecologists are therefore, trained to treat endometriosis, however some clinicians may have developed a subspecialty interest in the disease and may treat patients who have a more complex form of the disease and require extensive surgery in tertiary centres.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mary-Jo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme