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6th July 2022

Deputy Smith
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 32601/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of consultants specialising in endometriosis care that are employed by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ Ref 32600.22: To ask the Minister for Health far below optimum levels of staffing of consultants specialising in endometriosis care employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Smith.

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.

Treatment for endometriosis may include pain medications, hormone treatment and surgical interventions. The different types of surgery for endometriosis span from the most minor laparoscopic procedure that will be carried out on a day-case basis to both diagnose and treat endometriosis that is early in development, to an extensive multi-disciplinary team-based approach for severe endometriosis. The most complex of cases may require involvement of other specialties like general surgery and urology. The time to diagnose endometriosis varies by patient due to its varying and ambiguous symptomology. The key aim of treatment is to relieve symptoms so that the condition does not interfere with day-to-day life for patients.

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.

The National Women's and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) initially invested in Tallaght University Hospital (TUH) in 2021 to enhance endometriosis services with total funding 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 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 will include Consultant Gynaecologists with expertise in diagnosing and managing endometriosis, including advanced laparoscopic surgical skills. The Framework will also propose that there be a named Lead Endometriosis Consultant within each 'hub' service.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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