



6 July 2022

Deputy Thomas Pringle
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ33062/22: To ask the Minister for Health the absolute number of ductal carcinoma in-situ, pre-cancers and cancers detected each year through BreastCheck; the detection rate of same in each of the years 2015 to 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

BreastCheck – the national breast screening service helps find cancer at an early stage. If it is found early, it is easier to treat and there’s a better chance of recovery. Breast screening does not find all breast cancers. But screening has been proven to lower the number of women dying from breast cancer.

Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is an early form of breast cancer where the cancer cells are inside the milk ducts, and have not spread within or outside the breast.

If DCIS is not treated, the cells may spread from the ducts into the surrounding breast tissue and become an invasive cancer (one that can spread to other parts of the body). DCIS can be low-, intermediate- or high-grade. Evidence has shown that many intermediate- and high-grade DCIS may progress to invasive cancers over time if left untreated. These represent the majority of DCIS detected by BreastCheck.

The following table shows the total number of DCIS detected and the total number of cancers detected for the years 2015-2020; as well as the rates of detection per 1,000 women screened. Data for 2021 is not yet available. BreastCheck records invasive cancers and DCIS. There is no category for pre-cancers in a population-based breast screening programme.

Total	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Number of ductal carcinoma in-situ	201	223	221	248	220	109
DCIS detected per 1,000 women screened	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.9
Number of cancers detected	986	975	1067	1190	1151	476
Cancer detected per 1,000 women screened	6.8	7	6.4	7.1	6.9	8.2

**provisional data not yet published*

Please note that fewer women were screened in 2020 because BreastCheck was paused between March and end of October that year; and again between January and March 2021. The programme was paused in order to protect participants and staff by complying with social distancing guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Since March 2021, breast screening services have been operating nationwide.

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☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ info@screeningservice.ie www.screeningservice.ie





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National Screening Service

During the pause in breast screening services, BreastCheck staff were temporarily redeployed into symptomatic and other services, including the response to COVID-19. We provided support to assess and treat women who were at a higher risk of breast cancer, and whose hospital appointments had been delayed because of COVID-19.

This temporary redeployment of services enabled high-risk patients who had symptoms to be seen quicker, with the aim of improving the outcome of any diagnosis during a time when breast health resources were constrained. This cohort of symptomatic women has been shown to have a significantly higher rate of cancer, and more time-dependent diagnosis, than the screened cohort.

For other queries, programme participants can call the Freephone information line on 1800 45 45 55; email: info@screeningservice.ie; or contact their clinic directly.

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

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy
Chief Executive

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