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15th March 2022

**RE: PQ 11328/22 - To ask the Minister for Health the percentage of patients triaged as non-urgent who are offered an appointment within 12 weeks of the date of receipt of a letter of referral in the cancer office; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Cullinane

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) collects data on the following access key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Symptomatic Breast Disease (SBD) Clinics across the eight cancer centres and Letterkenny satellite hospital:

- **New attendances (non-urgent)** - The total number of new patients triaged as non-urgent by the cancer centre attending SBD Clinics each month
- **Proportion (%) of monthly new attendances (non-urgent) that were offered/attended an appointment within the recommended timeframe of 12 weeks from receipt of referral in the SBD Clinic.**

Non-Urgent Breast New Attendance	Metric	Oct '21	Nov '21	Dec '21
<b>National</b>	%	39.9%	45.6%	47.8%
	N	1,396	2,114	1,348

*Table 1 – The total number of new patients (N) triaged as non-urgent attending SBD Clinics and the proportion (%) of those who were offered/attended an appointment within the recommended timeframe of 12 weeks from receipt of referral, October – December 2021*

All the national SBD Clinics remained open and accepted referrals throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic; in the initial period, priority was given to patients triaged as urgent as this patient cohort has a relatively high suspicion of malignancy with a cancer detection rate of approximately 9%, as opposed to non-urgent patients where the cancer detection rate is considerably lower at <1%. All SBD Clinics have identified COVID-19 related patient backlogs and are actively addressing these backlogs with additional clinics, extended clinics and, in some units, access to mammography prior to clinical review.

Approximately 3,500 female breast cancers are diagnosed each year in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> The total number of primary breast cancers diagnosed annually at SBD clinics in patients triaged as non-urgent was 176 (2019), 162 (2020) and 177 (2021).

Yours sincerely



Professor Risteárd Ó Laoide  
National Director  
National Cancer Control Programme

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/NCRI\\_Annual%20Report\\_2021.pdf](https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/NCRI_Annual%20Report_2021.pdf)

