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8/12/22

PQ 58506/22: To ask the Minister for Health the average waiting time for mammograms following referral by GPs and BreastCheck; if family history of breast cancer reduces the wait time; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Ward,

The Symptomatic Breast Disease (SBD) clinics, located at the eight designated cancer centres and a satellite clinic in Letterkenny University Hospital, offer a dedicated pathway to diagnostic evaluation and specialist review for symptomatic people with suspected breast cancer in Ireland. On evaluation at an SBD clinic, the person may receive any/all of a range of diagnostic tests, including mammography.

Most referrals to the SBD clinics are made electronically by GPs. On receipt at the clinic, referrals are triaged as urgent or routine. If deemed urgent, the clinic aims to offer an appointment within 2 weeks and if deemed non urgent (routine), the clinic aims to offer an appointment within 12 weeks of referral.

The NCCP does not collect data on the number of people waiting to be reviewed at SBD clinics. However, NCCP does routinely monitor the proportion of new attendees at SBD clinics who were offered an appointment within the recommended timeframe (2 weeks for those triaged as urgent, 12 weeks for those triaged as non-urgent (routine)). Approximately 9% of people triaged as urgent will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Less than 1% of people triaged as routine will be diagnosed with breast cancer – this is similar to the breast cancer detection rate in an asymptomatic screened population.

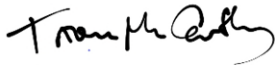
The NCCP in collaboration with the Breast Care Clinicians are currently developing a GP Guideline and Clinical Pathway for people with a suspected elevated risk of breast cancer due to family history.

Information relating to the National Screening Service (NSS) as provided by Gerry Mullins, Communications Officer, NSS:

BreastCheck is a population breast screening programme and invites well women between the ages of 50 and 69 for a screening mammogram on a two-yearly basis. Along with many public services, BreastCheck was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of this, it will take three years to get through the current screening round. We aim to be back to two-yearly screens by autumn 2023.

BreastCheck is not a referral-based programme; we neither refer women for mammograms nor are women referred to us for mammograms. Women who have a family history of breast cancer are reviewed by their GP and managed, where appropriate, by the symptomatic service.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Caitriona McCarthy
Consultant in Public Health Medicine
National Cancer Control Programme

