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8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Deputy Sean Sherlock  
Dáil Éireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ Number: 58514/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of hospitalisations for children and older adults afflicted with respiratory syncytial virus infection, recorded by hospital and month from September to February in each of the years 2019 to 2021, and from September to date in 2022, in tabular form.**

Dear Deputy Sherlock

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

In the attached excel file please find as requested the number of hospitalisations for children and older adults infected with respiratory syncytial virus infection (RSV), recorded by hospital and month from September to February for the years 2019 to date (27<sup>th</sup> November 2022). The data for the different years is labelled on the individual tabs. These data were extracted on the 01/12/2022 from Ireland's computerised infectious disease reporting system (CIDR) at the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is notifiable in Ireland since January 2012. HPSC only reports on data notified to them. Hence, data on the hospitalisation status and names of hospitals for RSV notifications may not be complete as the patient type is not always reported/updated for notified RSV cases. Please note RSV is a seasonal virus with outbreaks typically occurring in winter months with the highest numbers of infections usually reported in Ireland in December and January every year, though the size of the peak varies from winter to winter.

There was an abrupt decline in RSV notifications during March 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, most likely due to limited testing for RSV at the start of the pandemic, the implementation of non-pharmaceutical interventions (including the closure of childcare facilities and schools) to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the widespread circulation of COVID-19 with very few other viruses circulating. All of these factors, followed by the absence of international travel likely played a role in the very low levels of RSV circulating from March 2020. The decline in RSV activity continued throughout the RSV surveillance period 2020/2021 (weeks 40 – 20; October 2020 - May 2021), with only two RSV cases notified to HPSC as hospital inpatients between September 2020 to February 2021 (please see attached excel).

A shift in RSV seasonality was observed in Ireland in the summer of 2021 and throughout the 2021/2022 RSV season. The RSV season began early with an emergence of cases in August/September 2021 and peaked in mid-November 2021, compared to previous seasons when RSV activity usually began to increase in October and peaked in

December or early January. For the 2020/2023 season to date a similar trend to the 2021/2022 season has been observed i.e. cases observed in early October and high activity observed in December.

If you require any further information or clarification please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,



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