



01 November 2022

Deputy Catherine Murphy  
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Our Ref: HM/Communications

**PQ52312/22: To ask the Minister for Health the date on which the CervicalCheck testing of samples will resume at a hospital (details supplied); the reason for the delay in resuming services at this location: the number of staff that have been recruited for the testing of samples at this location; the number of vacancies that are outstanding.**

**Details supplied:** The Coombe Hospital in Dublin.

**PQ52313/22: To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide a schedule of hospitals that export CervicalCheck samples for testing to other jurisdictions; and the number of samples that have been exported by hospital in 2022.**

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Questions, which I intend to answer as one. I trust you are agreeable with this approach.

Two quality-assured laboratories process all CervicalCheck tests. They are Quest Diagnostics in the US, and the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital (CWIUH) in Dublin. They perform HPV primary testing with reflex cytology.

The Coombe Hospital has not been in a position to provide this service over the last number of months due to a combination of factors, including the significant cyber attack it suffered in December 2021 and continued staff absence due to illness.

The Coombe laboratory is not currently processing cervical screening samples however, CervicalCheck and the Coombe are working closely towards an early resumption date which is dependent on the resolution of staffing issues and meeting certain quality standards; We are grateful to our laboratory provider in the US for processing samples during this post-cyber attack period, ensuring we continue to meet our key performance indicator of getting result letters to women within four weeks in over 90% of cases.

### **National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL)**

The NCSL is being developed by the HSE and the CWIUH and is designed to be a national centre of excellence for cervical screening. It will be commissioned by Ireland's cervical screening programme, CervicalCheck, to process women's cervical screening samples. It is expected to be operating by year-end.

The new laboratory is designed to become CervicalCheck's main provider of cervical screening laboratory services. However, recruitment of skilled staff at all levels is a top priority and will continue to be so for several years as the NCSL increases the number of CervicalCheck samples it receives.

The Coombe has recruited 11.9 WTE staff for the NCSL, with 5.3 WTE vacancies. The process of recruiting to these posts is ongoing.

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

### Hospital samples

We do not keep records of the numbers of CervicalCheck samples exported by hospital as hospitals do not export CervicalCheck cervical screening samples.

### Cervical screening

CervicalCheck - the national cervical screening programme, plays an important role in preventing cervical cancer in Ireland. The number of women who developed cervical cancer fell by 7% year-on-year between 2010 and 2015. More recent data shows that the decreasing incidence has been sustained even as the programme matures, with a 2.8% annual percentage decrease from 2010-2018. In the first ten years of the programme it provided almost 3.2 million cervical screening tests, and detected over 115,000 abnormalities (including 64,000 high grade abnormalities), many of which could have developed into cervical cancer if not detected through screening.

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

Yours sincerely,

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Fiona Murphy,  
Chief Executive.

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National Screening Service



BreastCheck  
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Ciock  
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck  
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERIBHEACS  
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen  
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púitige  
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic RetinaScreen  
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Riatróil do Dhiabéitigh  
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme