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28th April, 2023

Minister Stephen Donnelly
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Minister Donnelly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to this Department for response.

PQ 17500/23

To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that dementia and Alzheimer's disease treatment and care are informed by the latest best practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The National Dementia Strategy was published in December 2014 and aims to improve dementia care so that people with dementia can live well for as long as possible, and can access services and supports in an equitable and timely manner. The development of the National Dementia Strategy was heavily influenced by the need to identify best practice in relation to dementia services. The foundation for the strategy was underpinned by following processes; review of the existing research base, review of international dementia policies/plans/strategies, review of Irish policy contexts, conducted a public consultation process, facilitation of a clinicians' roundtable discussion on the National Dementia Strategy and workshops involving people with dementia and carers working in the area. The devolvement of National Dementia Strategy was overseen by the National Dementia Strategy Advisory Group.

The Dementia Model of Care is due to be published on May 31st, 2023 and builds upon the work of the National Dementia Strategy (2014), the HSE Corporate Plan 2021 - 2024 and has been developed within the context of Sláintecare (2020–2023) and the health reform agenda, where delivering the right care, in the right place, at the right time, given by the right team, is a central principle. The aim of the Dementia Model of Care is to bring together best practice in relation to earlier recognition and intervention for those living with dementia as well as their support networks. The Dementia Model of Care offers in-depth guidance which is presented across a series of targets and practice recommendations to advance the treatment, care and support for the thousands of people living with dementia in Ireland and outlines best practice for:

- a) Pathways to diagnosis and guidance on assessment for clinicians
- b) Communication of a diagnosis using best international practice
- c) Care planning/personalised care planning-inclusive of the person with dementia and their supporter/carer
- d) Post-diagnostic support across five strands which include understanding and planning, staying connected, staying healthy, supporting cognition and emotional wellbeing

The Dementia Model of Care provides for a diagnostic model utilising three levels of assessment:

Level 1: Primary Care

GP delivered assessment is considered Level 1, this may include support and information from any of the Enhanced Community Care (ECC) programme services; CHN/Primary Care Teams, Community Specialist Teams for older people, Community Specialist Teams for chronic disease and Community Intervention Teams (CIT). The decision on appropriateness of referral to Memory Assessment and Support Service, Regional Specialist Memory Clinic or the National Intellectual Disability Memory Service is at the discretion of the primary care physician.

Level 2: Memory Assessment and Support Service

People 65 years or over with a typical and clear presentation of dementia will predominantly be assessed and supported in a Level 2: Memory Assessment and Support Service (MASS) (or/other specialist service). If a diagnosis is communicated, the person with dementia will be offered relevant post diagnostic supports in their geographical area. As of April, 2023; nine MASS's have been funded to date, they are located in the Donegal, Sligo, Cavan/Monaghan, Mullingar, Limerick, Kerry, Cork, Wexford and Waterford. Funding for additional MASS sites will be sought in future NSP estimates bids.

Level 3: Regional Specialist Memory Clinic (RSMC)

People 65 years or under with a suspected dementia or those with atypical or unclear presentations that require a more detailed assessment will predominantly be assessed and supported in a Level 3: Regional Specialist Memory Clinic (RSMC). However, they may utilise the post diagnostic support services that are local to where the person with dementia lives. As of April, 2023; four RSMC's have been funded to date, they are located in the Mercy University Hospital, Cork, Galway University Hospital, Tallaght University Hospital and St James's Hospital, Dublin.

National Intellectual Disability Memory Service

It should also be noted that people with an intellectual disability (ID) require particular consideration, as they have a significantly higher risk of developing dementia when compared to the general population (Strydom et al. 2013). The recently established National Intellectual Disability Memory Service (NIDMS) in Tallaght University Hospital will follow the pathway outlined above but also possess the unique MDT skill-mix required to assess and diagnose the more complex and often unmet needs of people with an intellectual disability.

Again, in striving for best practice in dementia services, the Dementia Model of Care also supports Ireland in meeting the targets set out by the World Health Organisation's Global Action Plan on Dementia (2017-2025), across six action areas:

- Action area 1: Dementia as a public health priority.
- Action area 2: Dementia awareness and friendliness.
- Action area 3: Dementia risk reduction.
- Action area 4: Dementia diagnosis, treatment, care and support.
- Action area 5: Support for dementia carers.
- Action area 6: Information systems for dementia.

In terms of healthcare professionals working in the area of dementia and in particular clinical staff who will be employed to work in any of the assessment services above, they are regulated by their respective professional body and must adhere to their code of professional conduct and ethics. This includes the

expectation that each healthcare professional will participate in continuous professional development which encourages healthcare professionals to seek up to date research and ensure they are delivering current best practice. There is a significant volume of research in the area of dementia being conducted nationally and internationally and this will only continue to increase as further advances are made in the treatment of dementia.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Janette Dwyer', is written over a horizontal line.

Janette Dwyer
Assistant National Director,
Services for Older People, Change & Innovation