

CC/RS/MD

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27th January 2023

Róisín Shortall TD
Dàil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

PQ 1578/23

To ask the Minister for Health if the recent decision to transport patients via ambulance directly to the medical assessment unit in Ennis General Hospital instead of University Hospital Limerick, subject to certain criteria, is a temporary or permanent measure; if additional resources will be provided to Ennis General Hospital on foot of this decision; if this measure will be extended to Nenagh General Hospital and St. John's Hospital, Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Róisín Shortall

Dear Deputy Shortall,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The Medical Assessment Unit (MAU) pathway for 112/999 patients commenced at Ennis Hospital on Monday, January 9th.

This pathway was successfully trialled in north Cork and Mallow General Hospital in 2022. It allows stable medical patients meeting agreed clinical criteria to be treated in a Model 2 hospital. A key element is a telephone referral from the treating paramedic to the receiving MAU doctor, which ensures that the right patient is brought to the MAU.

This pathway will result in patients receiving medical treatment in a hospital closer to their home, will reduce patient presentations to Emergency Departments and will release ambulances more quickly to respond to other emergency calls.

112/999 patients that do not meet these clinical criteria will continue to be transported to Emergency Departments for assessment and treatment. The Medical Assessment Unit in Ennis Hospital treats patients referred by GPs, ShannonDoc and now NAS paramedics. It is essential that unwell medical patients do not attend the MAU without a referral.

We are pleased with the progress of this initiative in the first two weeks.

An evaluation of the new pathway involving our MAU physicians and our partners in NAS is ongoing and will inform any expansion of the service.



However, we have every expectation of success for this new pathway, with a view to continuing the service in Ennis MAU and, with the agreement of NAS and the HSE, expanding it to our medical assessment units in Nenagh and St John's hospitals.

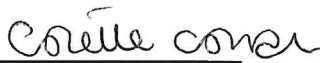
We currently expect the new pathway to commence at Nenagh MAU in early February 2023 and at St John's Hospital some time thereafter as resources are agreed and put in place.

It should be noted that the MAU in Ennis has seen an increase in staffing levels recently. This follows approval by the National Treatment Purchase Fund in late 2020 of a business plan to expand the service in Ennis. This has allowed for additional medical, nursing, allied health and support staff to be recruited for Ennis MAU in 2021 and 2022.

These additional staff have supported increased activity at Ennis MAU, where GPs can refer patients seven days a week. Attendances at Ennis MAU increased from 4,766 in 2019 to 7,768 in 2022, an increase of 63%. In 2022, there was an annual increase of 14% in attendances to Ennis MAU.

I trust this clarifies the position, please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group