



31 January 2022

Deputy John McGuinness TD
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ64003.23: To ask the Minister for Health the number of cases and the total amount paid out in compensation for screening errors, perceived and actual, relative to the CervicalCheck screening programme in each of the years 2017 to 2022 and to date in 2023; the number of women who were successfully treated having been identified through the screening programme; if he will provide figures for the reduction of cervical cancer since the programme began; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy McGuinness,

I understand the first part of the above Parliamentary Question, which refers to compensation, has been answered by the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD. I refer to the second part of the question which refers to treatment and the reduction in cervical cancer numbers.

The purpose of cervical screening is to identify people in an apparently healthy population who are at higher risk of developing abnormal cells, and to enable early detection of cervical cancer, so that an early treatment or intervention can be offered.

CervicalCheck plays an important role in preventing cervical cancer in Ireland. Our most recent data shows a continued decreasing incidence in the number of women who develop cervical cancer, with a 2.8% annual percentage decrease from 2009-2019.

From September 2008 to March 2020, we 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.

In addition, 1,786 cancers were diagnosed in women as a result of cervical screening between September 2008 and March 2020.

Every year, cervical screening identifies and treats precancerous cells on the cervix in approximately 12,500 women. The international evidence shows that treatment of CIN (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia) is approximately 90% effective, so the majority of these women will never need another treatment. Of the 10% of women who require a repeat treatment, for more than half, their conditions will still be identified at the precancerous stage.

The National Cancer Registry of Ireland, in its *Cancer Trends* report of September 2022, says there is substantial evidence showing that the introduction of a screening programme results in a greater proportion of early stage (stage I and II) cancers being detected, and that earlier diagnosis results in improvements in survival time at an individual level and on cancer mortality rates in the longer term.

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National Screening Service

This is consistent with the findings of the *Cervical Check Programme Report, September 2017-March 2020*, which says: “When well women are diagnosed via screening they have an 80% chance that their cancer will be detected at stage 1. By the time women develop symptoms and present to gynaecology clinics, their cancer is usually stage 2 or higher.”

The *Cancer Trends* report can be viewed on ncr.ie, or by clicking [here](#). The *CervicalCheck Programme Report* can be viewed on screeningservice.ie, or by clicking [here](#).

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the NSS has joined forces with the National Cancer Control Programme and National Immunisation Office to launch Ireland's roadmap to eliminate cervical cancer. Ireland's roadmap shows the strides made so far towards this global goal, and signposts the future direction we will take, breaking this ambitious journey into achievable stages. The global goals have been developed by the World Health Organization and set key targets that all countries are asked to strive towards in HPV vaccination, cervical screening and early treatment. Ireland is one of the first countries to commit to cervical cancer elimination.

You can read more about cervical cancer elimination on screeningservice.ie, or by clicking [here](#).

We provide updates on our cervical screening services on www.cervicalcheck.ie. People can also contact us at info@cervicalcheck.ie, or Freephone 1800 45 45 55. You can read our published data on CervicalCheck in our programme reports which are uploaded to the Publications section of screeningservice.ie, or by clicking [here](#).

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

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy
Chief Executive
National Screening Service

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An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Cioch
The National Breast Screening Programme



AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERIBHEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púitige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



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