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27<sup>th</sup> July 2023

**PQ32678/23**

**To ask the Minister for Health the full-year cost to reduce the waiting list for cancer genetic screening by 50%.**

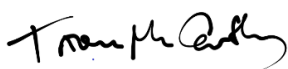
Dear Deputy Murphy,

Genetics is recognised as a growing and integral part of cancer care, with a role across treatment, early detection and risk reduction. The National Cancer Control Programme's [Hereditary Cancer Model of Care](#), launched in June 2023, focuses on the clinical services required for the identification of cancer predisposition and for the ongoing management of those with a predisposition. A number of initiatives are underway, with the aim of reducing the often lengthy waiting times for cancer genetic testing. This has included additional posts in the specialist cancer genetics area, and a mainstreaming pilot scheme whereby pre-test counselling is carried out by regional oncology services.

Of note, the rate-limiting factor in hereditary cancer genetic testing is typically not the cost of the laboratory test or 'diagnostic screen' and indeed genetic testing may not be clinically appropriate for a number of those on such waiting lists, once assessed. The primary challenge to waiting times is due to workforce constraints, with the need to ensure patients are appropriately risk assessed and counselled prior to a genetic test, the correct testing requested and appropriate clinical follow up takes place.

Improved access to genetic counselling, testing and diagnosis is a challenge in other clinical areas also, not just cancer. The [National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine in Ireland](#), published by the HSE in December 2022, highlighted a number of such system challenges in genetics in Ireland, and the need for investment, workforce development, national guidance and service redesign. The NCCP will continue to work collaboratively on these areas, as they relate to cancer services, with the National Genetics and Genomics Office.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Caitriona McCarthy

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