



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta
Géaroibríochtaí

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Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

10th August 2023

PQ 35057/23 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of children with scoliosis and spina bifida who had procedures carried out by the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, in hospitals in Germany and France for the years 2017 to date, the cost to the HSE, broken down by month, by year, by hospital, by country; to outline if such arrangements are still in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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. I believe a response issued from the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) and you consequently followed up with the HSE CEO seeking further details on the matter.

In 2022, 509 scoliosis procedures were carried out, compared to 380 for the same period in 2019 (the most recent comparable year given the Covid pandemic). That represents a 34% increase and an increase of 47% compared to 2021.

Despite undertaking a substantial number of spinal procedures in 2022, corresponding reductions in the waiting list were offset by significant increases in demand and referrals compared to previous years, with a 30% increase in additions to the spinal surgery list compared to 2021. CHI advises that this is due to a loss of additional capacity elsewhere and latent Covid-19 demand via increased outpatient activity. The impact of the plan was also affected by challenges in the recruitment of essential staff and delays in capital developments.

Please be advised that in relation to the question raised above, 28 children from 2017 to date have had procedures carried out abroad (UK and Germany) at a cost of € 1,957,439. There has been a significant increase in activity, resulting in many more patients being treated.

No surgeries were outsourced abroad in 2019. However, the Minister has requested that the HSE explore this. While this is not a sustainable solution, all options need to be explored given the significant increase in demand.



Last year the Minister approved a plan from Children's Health Ireland to reduce the number of children waiting for spinal orthopaedic procedures (scoliosis/spina bifida). Some €19 million of current and capital funding was committed to tackle waiting lists.

The Government continues to invest significant funding to help clinicians reduce the amount of time children are waiting for important hospital appointments and procedures. The investment in 2022, has continued into 2023, with scoliosis/spina bifida again included as a priority area for funding.

I trust this is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nessa Lynch', written over a horizontal line.

Nessa Lynch
General Manager
Acute Operations