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09th August 2023

Deputy Canney
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 35758/23: To ask the Minister for Health the number of neo-natal deaths that have been registered which included premature delivery or termination of pregnancy as a cause of death and in cases in which a condition was present affecting the foetus that was likely to lead to the death of the foetus either before or within 28 days of birth.

Dear Deputy Canney,

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 have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Where a baby is stillborn or dies in the neonatal period, following a termination of pregnancy for fatal fetal anomaly, HSE guidance stipulates that the cause of death should be stated as that directly leading to the death, and also the antecedent causes or conditions which gave rise to this.

<https://www.rcpi.ie/Faculties-Institutes/Institute-of-Obstetricians-and-Gynaecologists/National-Clinical-Guidelines-in-Obstetrics-and-Gynaecology>

The current legislation on registration of live births states that if an infant is born with signs of life, regardless of birthweight or gestational age, the birth is registered as a live birth. If the subsequent death of the infant occurs during the perinatal period, the death should be registered as a neonatal death.


The HSE does not collate data on neonatal death registration incorporating premature delivery or termination of pregnancy due to fetal anomaly however, does work closely with the National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre (NPEC) who have since 2008 provided an annual national assessment of perinatal mortality in Ireland, from a clinical viewpoint. Since January 2019, limited data on perinatal deaths, as defined in this audit, following TOP are detailed in the NPEC Perinatal Mortality Audit Reports. In the most recently published annual perinatal mortality audit report (2020), eleven percent (n=39, 10.9%) of all recorded perinatal deaths (n=357), with a birthweight ≥ 500 g and/or gestation at delivery ≥ 24 weeks reported to NPEC resulted from a TOP (stillbirths; n=29 of 240, 12.1% and neonatal deaths; n=10 of 117, 8.5%).

The National Perinatal Mortality Reports are publicly available and can be accessed online at:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/npec/npec-clinical-audits/perinatalmortality/perinatalmortalityreportsandforms/>

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. O'Donnell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Davinia O'Donnell, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme