

Johnny Guirke TD
Sinn Féin
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
e. johnny.guirke@oireachtas.ie

27th July 2023

Re. 30570/23: To ask the Minister for Health the number and proportion of people referred by their GP to pigmented skin lesion clinics electronically, in each of the months from 2020 to 2023, in tabular form.

Dear Deputy Guirke,

The number of GP referrals to the Pigmented Lesion Clinics (PLC) for those with a suspicion of skin melanoma sent via the Healthlink GP e-referral system is given as follows:

Healthlink	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Pigmented Lesion Clinic													
2023	1,201	1,160	1,435	1,342	1,897	2,179							9,214
2022	873	1,010	1,077	1,194	1,491	1,496	1,474	1,703	1,380	1,158	1,224	842	14,922
2021	448	670	928	967	422	831	1,300	1,183	1,213	939	930	631	10,462
2020	468	440	251	212	435	701	856	723	828	783	839	595	7,131

Please note the following caveats in interpreting this data:

For earlier years, GP referrals to Pigmented Lesion Clinics were less exclusively made electronically and as such the electronic referral data presented here is only a subset of all referral activity.

The increased numbers seen between 2020 and 2023 are strongly influenced by two important factors. Firstly, the additional roll-out and increased uptake of the Healthlink system among GPs and secondly, the addition of more hospitals as they go live with PLC e-referrals; Naas General Hospital (February 2021), Beaumont (October 2021), Mater (March 2023) with Galway due to go live later this year.

The number of GP referrals made during May/June 2021 will be higher than is shown as GPs switched over to manual means (phone/letter/fax) due to the cyber-attack on the HSE.

The number of people presenting to their GP for a suspicion of skin melanoma is characteristically subject to strong seasonal variation.

The National Cancer Control Programme do not have access to the number of patients attending each hospital-based Pigmented Lesion Clinic and so cannot comment on the proportion of attendances that were referred by electronic means.

Yours sincerely



Patrick Cafferty
Assistant National Director
National Cancer Control Programme