

CC/VAW/MC

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01st March 2023

Ms Violet-Anne Wynne TD,
Dàil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

PQ 10577/23

To ask the Minister for Health if he is aware of the cancellation of elective surgeries on a number of occasions in the past week at Ennis Hospital; the contingencies he will put in place to ensure that this does not happen again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Violet-Anne Wynne

Dear Deputy Wynne,

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.

Reductions in scheduled care early in the new year have been a feature of our winter plan in recent years to allow us manage surges in medical patients associated with winter viruses and illness. Accordingly, there was no elective activity scheduled in our hospitals during the first two weeks of January.

However, this year's surge in demand for beds exceeded capacity to the extent that, as per our Escalation Plan, additional reductions in scheduled care were necessary, delaying the resumption of day surgery in Ennis Hospital and Nenagh Hospital, where beds on the day ward were used as surge capacity for medical inpatients.

The gradual resumption of day surgery at Nenagh began on Tuesday, February 7th, and at Ennis on Thursday, February 9th. This has been under review on a daily basis, as we continue to have high numbers of inpatients across our sites, and ongoing high numbers of attendances at the Emergency Department in UHL.

Last week, there were further reductions in day surgery at Ennis and Nenagh, and inpatient surgery in St John's Hospital, had to be cancelled in order to create surge capacity. We apologise to all patients impacted, who are contacted directly, and will be offered a rescheduled appointment at the earliest opportunity.

It is important to note that these decisions are reviewed daily and decisions are made in consultation with local hospital management in Ennis and Nenagh. There is a degree of flexibility which allows for some elective work to continue even if some day beds are being used by medical patients. For example, a theatre list for special needs patients requiring dental surgery went ahead Nenagh last Thursday. In addition, a gynaecology list went ahead in Nenagh last Friday and a maxillofacial list also went ahead in Ennis.



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Cancellations are the decision of last resort that no hospital manager wishes to make, but in the context of the current levels of demand for our services, and our well documented shortage of hospital beds, these decisions are necessary for ensuring our services can remain safely open for the sickest patients who are most in need of care.

I trust this clarifies the position, please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group