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PQ 20501/23

To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the waiting list for genetic test for BRCA1; the number of persons on the waiting list; and the average waiting times per hospital, in tabular form

Dear Deputy Murphy

Specialist cancer genetics services are provided at St James's Hospital (SJH) Cancer Genetics Service and at the Department of Clinical Genetics, Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin. Please note that the waiting times and numbers provided by the hospitals below are for any cancer genetics appointment, not specifically for an assessment and testing in relation to a genetic test for BRCA1, as that would not be possible to separate out.

There are currently 2,955 patients on the cancer genetics waiting list awaiting a cancer genetics appointment in SJH and 236 patients (adult and children) on the cancer genetics waiting list in CHI at Crumlin.

The current average waiting times for a new cancer genetics appointment in SJH are listed in the table below. These are broken down by triage category (Urgent, ASAP, Routine) and relate to the period January-March 2023. Re-referrals are patients who were referred to the service, who were seen in clinic previously and then for a various reasons were re-referred to the service to be seen again.

SJH waiting times for a cancer genetics appointment	
Visit Type	Average Days - Referral to Appointment
New-Routine	715
New-ASAP	71
New-Urgent	39
Overall Average	396
Visit Type	Average Days - Referral to Appointment
New-Re-referral	1197
Overall Average	1197

The data for BRCA1 patients on the waiting list is not available. However, the SJH service did see 14 patients for BRCA1 predictive testing (i.e. cascade testing in relatives) from January to July 2022, i.e. 5% of all new patients seen in clinic during this period

Over 2021/22, the Department of Clinical Genetics in CHI at Crumlin reduced the waiting list for genetic testing with regard to cancer genes from over 24 months to predominately under 12 months. This was due in large part to a targeted blitz of Consultant and Genetic Counsellor cancer waiting lists during COVID by maximising virtual appointments. Additionally, an active triage Family History Questionnaire ensures that only high risk affected and predictive cases are seen in the cancer genetic clinic, keeping the waiting list appropriate with correct referrals.

The introduction, in May 2022, of a dedicated paediatric cancer genetics multidisciplinary monthly meeting is proving hugely successful in streamlining the diagnostic process for these children. Children Health Ireland has recruited an additional Genetic Consultant, due to take up post mid- May 2023.

Waiting times for a cancer genetics appointment in CHI at Crumlin are currently as follows:

CHI at Crumlin waiting times for cancer genetics appointment	
0-3 months	58 (24.5%)
3 -6 months	119 (50.4%)
6-9 months	38 (16.1%)
9-12 months*	11 (4.5%)
over 12 months*	10 (4.2%)

*9 of the 21 waiting longer than either 9 or 12 months have already been offered an appointment, which was rescheduled.

Yours sincerely,



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