

CC/AK/MC

Email: pgmidwestacute@hse.ie

10th October 2023

Mr Alan Kelly TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 43928/23

To ask the Minister for Health for a breakdown of all the radiotherapy machines in UHL; the type of machine; when it was first used in the hospital; and any gaps in service for any machine, between 1 January 2020 to date, in tabular form. -Alan Kelly

Dear Deputy Kelly,

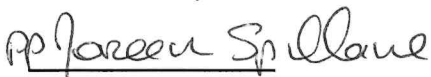
The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Radiation oncology services at University Hospital Limerick are provided by the Mater Private Network.

Please find attached correspondence from Mr Hugh Healy, Director of Cancer, Mater Private Network regarding your query.

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group

DATE: 09/OCT/2023

FAO: Mr. Alan Kelly, TD
[response via email through the HSE communications department for UHL]

SUBJECT: PQ 43928

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Thank you for your recent inquiry relating to radiation oncology services at University Hospital Limerick. Since MPN began treatment at the Mid-Western Regional Oncology Centre, over 13,500 patients have been treated in our facilities.

This year we have invested ~€5.5m in the upgrading of a CT machine (completed) and a linear accelerator, LINAC (completed). We replaced the older of two linear accelerators (LINACs) in the facility so that we could increase our capacity, and the level of service, offered to the residents in the region of Limerick and the Mid-West.

With a complex structure and advanced technology a LINAC is used to generate penetrating X-Rays for the treatment of cancer. It relies on many components including microwave generators, high-speed electrical switching systems, gas and water components, heavy collimating structures and a high complexity control system designed to ensure safe operation.

The older of the two machines we operate recently incurred a fault which led to it temporarily being taken out of operation. This can occur occasionally - international peer reviewed journal data suggests typical down time of 1.5% to 30%.

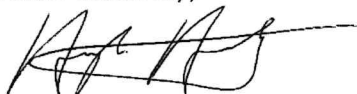
Unfortunately, the newer of the two machines concurrently encountered a software error – a common issue representing 10% of all failures on LINACS - and was out of commission for one day as it was reset, quality assurance tested and commissioned with new settings.

It should be noted that our downtime is well within industry norms and represents 3% of total available time over 2022 and 2023. So far this year, including the issues encountered in the past week, our downtime is at 3.4% of operating time (5 days a week, 12 hours a day).

Patients who are impacted by any downtime are prioritised to restart their treatment and ensure no clinical risk. Patients whose start date is pushed out by a week will be monitored for any clinical impact. Where necessary, the site expands its working day from 12hrs to 14hrs to address any clinically important patient loads as directed by our two employed radiation oncologists.

We are dedicated to the ongoing care of patients in need of radiation oncology services in Limerick and the Mid-West, now and into the future. We believe it is important that patients be able to access these services locally, and we will continue to invest in our services for the benefit of everyone in the region.

Yours sincerely,



Hugh Healy
Director of Cancer