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16th October 2023

E/PQ 38046/23

To ask the Minister for Health the current approach for notifying those with the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation when they are due for an MRI scan; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

E/PQ 38047/23

To ask the Minister for Health what designated hospital resources are assigned for surveillance testing for those with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Shorthall,

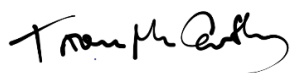
Existing challenges in services for those with an inherited cancer predisposition, such as BRCA, include capacity to provide ongoing management such as surveillance imaging and the appropriate coordination of these services. These issues have been highlighted in both the [Hereditary Cancer Model of Care](#) and the [National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine in Ireland](#).

Within cancer centres, equipment and staffing for breast imaging are currently shared across services for those with symptomatic disease and for those undergoing surveillance. The National Cancer Control Programme has invested in breast radiology services but common challenges also remain, e.g. in the area of recruitment and retention.

At a national level, work is underway on the standardisation of surveillance protocols for those at higher risk of breast cancer, based on family history or known genetic predisposition such as BRCA. The intention is to ensure equity of access to necessary surveillance imaging and to prioritise access for those at highest risk. Implementation of the recommendations made will remain subject to the availability of resources for new developments, through the national service planning process.

Current practice for notification of imaging appointments is that it is coordinated by individual cancer centres. Overall coordination of ongoing patient care has been enhanced through the development of Clinical Nurse Specialist and Advance Nurse Practitioner roles in the areas of breast family risk. Through the national service planning process, we have been striving to provide administrative support to these services, to ensure best use of these key nursing roles and improve the coordination of the care provided to patients.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Caitriona McCarthy

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