



Ref: PQ 40400/23

09<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Deputy Paul Donnelly**  
**Dáil Eireann**  
**Dublin 2**

Dear Deputy Donnelly

I refer to your below parliamentary question which has been forwarded to me for attention.

**PQ 40400/23: To ask the Minister for Health the latest update on the rollout of oral immunotherapy for children; the location of each facility in which the treatment is dispensed; and the funding and timeline for same.**

**Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:**

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) can advise that there is currently no planned timeline for the rollout of an Oral Immunotherapy service(OIT) for Irish children, since the issue of such service planning was first raised by the Allergy Consultants in April 2021. However, the Allergy Services in CHI and Cork University Hospital have been anticipating the coming of this treatment for some-time, having been involved in 3 Multicenter Research Trials, the outcome of which was the development of Palforzia, the first licensed Peanut OIT product. They continue to be involved in further trials in Epicutaneous (through the skin) Immunotherapy and have pioneered the use of other immunomodulatory clinical approaches in milk and egg allergy.

Although Palforzia has not had as large an uptake in the US as anticipated, the general principles of OIT established as part of the international trials are beginning to be adapted to foods other than peanut. Centres abroad are now forging ahead with non-proprietary immunotherapy.

One in 20 children in Ireland have a food allergy. There are approximately 20,000 children in Ireland with peanut allergy alone. Parents are now very much aware of the concept of immunotherapy and its benefits. The number of Irish patients travelling abroad for treatment is increasing. This is a major concern for us as they do not have their prescribing doctor in this jurisdiction in the event of an adverse event such as unexpected anaphylaxis which is a risk while on this therapy.

The National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE) re-commenced its review of Palforzia full submission on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (as per their website). Treatment with this product will not be appropriate for all peanut allergic patients. However, we anticipate that 40% of patients will be

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann



Children's Health Ireland

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suitable candidates. Access to a service like this that will significantly improve quality of life should be available for all suitable patients.

Allergy services are currently unable to commence the rollout of any substantial OIT program. Current resources are focused on urgent cases and allergy prevention strategies in young infants. Delivery of OIT in addition to current service provision will require the development of a new Immunotherapy service with at least 2 Allergy Consultants with support of both clinical and nonclinical personnel. A business case has been developed at CHI for escalation to the HSE.

Yours sincerely

**PROF. SEAN WALSH**  
**CLINICAL DIRECTOR/ SITE LEAD**  
**CHI at Crumlin**

Our **Mission** is to: Promote and provide child-centred, research-led and learning informed healthcare, to the highest standards of safety and excellence. We will do this in partnership with each other, with children, young people and their families through a network of children's services in Ireland.

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