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23rd April 2024

Deputy Nolan  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 14749/24: To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE collects data on the incidence rate at national or CHO area level of women who obtained a medical abortion and who were subsequently found to have had an ectopic pregnancy; if so, will he seek to provide that data for the years 2019 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Nolan.

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. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy that grows outside of the womb. It cannot develop into a baby and it could put the health of the woman at risk if the pregnancy continues. Ectopic pregnancies affect 1 in every 80 pregnancies in Ireland. An ectopic pregnancy usually happens in the fallopian tube.

Ectopic pregnancies are rare in women presenting for termination of pregnancy. A large study of 233,805 women who underwent early medical TOP, found that the rate of diagnosis of ectopic pregnancy post early medical TOP was 7 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup>

As stated in the IOG Interim Clinical Guidance on Termination of pregnancy under 12 weeks, if a certifying doctor has concerns that history or examination finding may suggest an ectopic pregnancy or a gestational age of more than 9 weeks, an ultrasound should be performed.<sup>2</sup>

The National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) in consultation with the IOG is overseeing a significant programme of work on the development and revision of Clinical Practice Guidelines in Maternity and Obstetrics.

An ambitious programme of work has been set out and a new guideline process has been developed. As part of this work, a new Clinical Practice Guideline on Termination of Pregnancy; and Ectopic

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<sup>1</sup> Cleland K., Creinin M.D., Nucatola D., Nshom M. & Trussell J. (2013) Significant adverse events and outcomes after medical abortion. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 121(1), 166-171.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/acute-hospitals-division/woman-infants/clinical-guidelines/interim-clinical-guidance-termination-of-pregnancy-under-12-weeks-2018-.pdf>

Pregnancy will be developed later this year. As with all NWIHP clinical practice guidelines, the guideline development process will include a multidisciplinary Expert Advisory Group, appointed at the offset to review guidelines prior to publication.

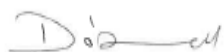
With regard to your specific queries on the number of ectopic pregnancies identified and managed post TOP, unfortunately data is not collated nationally in such a manner as would allow us to provide these numbers.

The Irish Maternity Indicator System (IMIS) National Report <sup>3</sup>, which can be accessed via the link below, does include data on the Number of women diagnosed with an ectopic pregnancy, including abdominal pregnancy, tubal pregnancy, ovarian pregnancy, and other/unspecified pregnancy.

Data on termination of pregnancy is collated by the Department of Health via the notification process. The Minister for Health must prepare a report <sup>4</sup> on the notifications received in a given year not later than 30 June the following year and lay it before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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**Davinia O'Donnell, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/acute-hospitals-division/woman-infants/national-reports-on-womens-health/irish-maternity-indicator-system-national-report-2022.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://opac.oireachtas.ie/Data/Library3/Documents%20Laid/2023/pdf/DOHdoclaid220623\\_111159.pdf](https://opac.oireachtas.ie/Data/Library3/Documents%20Laid/2023/pdf/DOHdoclaid220623_111159.pdf).