



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, An Foirgneamh
Brunel, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath D08 X01F
T: 076 695 9991

National Women and Infants Health Programme
Health Service Executive, The Brunel Building, Heuston
South Quarter, Dublin D08 X01F
T: 076 695 9991

30th April 2024

Deputy Fitzpatrick
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 16428/24: To ask the Minister for Health to provide the latest advice he has received from his Department or the HSE which relate to the operation of telemedicine abortion; whether any studies have yet been undertaken into the operation of telemedicine abortion in Ireland, including risk analyses; if so, to provide a copy of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Fitzpatrick,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position on the various areas and issues you raised.

As part of the Government's ongoing efforts to protect public health and limit the spread of COVID-19, the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) worked together in 2020 to put arrangements in place to allow termination of pregnancy services in early pregnancy to be provided remotely. In September 2021, the Department of Health requested the HSE's National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) to undertake a review of the operation of the revised Model of Care for Termination of Pregnancy Services. The review concluded that including remote consultation as part of termination of pregnancy services is safe, effective and acceptable.

The safety of termination of pregnancy by telemedicine is also endorsed by organisations with significant experience in providing termination of pregnancy care including, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), the National Unplanned Pregnancy Advisory Service and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Following the review, the then Chief Medical Officer (CMO) wrote to the HSE confirming his agreement with its conclusion to maintain the retention of remote consultation as part of a blended approach to termination of pregnancy care and asked the HSE to update the Model of Care accordingly to incorporate the blended model as the enduring Model of Care for Termination of Pregnancy Services.

The revised, blended, Model of Care was subsequently endorsed and signed-off and is now publicly available on the HSE website at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/acute-hospitals-division/woman-infants/national-reports-on-womens-health/model-of-care-termination-of-pregnancy-services-2023-.pdf>


The Model of Care, reflects a well-researched, evidence informed and experienced based model which aligns with the HSE's commitment to the provision of a high quality, safe, accessible termination of pregnancy service. While it provides for remote consultation, in general, early medical termination of pregnancy will be provided by in-person or a blend of in-person and remote consultation. Full remote provision of early medical termination of pregnancy will not be routine and will only be provided in extenuating circumstances, using clinical judgement and putting appropriate safeguards in place.

Exactly as is the case for an in-person consultation, medical practitioners undertaking a remote early pregnancy TOP consultation will a) take a detailed medical history, b) remain alert for any verbal or visual cues which might raise concern about the patients safety and c) determine the duration of pregnancy based on the date of the woman's Last Menstrual Period (LMP).

In line with RCOG advice on "Best Practice in Telemedicine for Abortion Care"2022, routine pre-termination ultrasound scanning will not be provided as routine, it will however be requested if there is clinically relevant uncertainty about the pregnancy duration, or if there is a suspected ectopic pregnancy.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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