



Ref: PQ 9715/24

05th March 2024

Deputy Pauline Tully
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Tully

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

PQ 9715/24 – To ask the Minister for Health the reason for lengthy waiting times for MRI scans at Temple Street Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

The reasons for lengthy waiting times for some MRIs in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Temple Street are:

- Lack of equipment capacity - CHI at Temple Street has only recently acquired access to a 2nd MRI scanner.
- Lack of Radiographer capacity to scan patients- currently CHI at Temple Street Radiographers have a 28.3% vacancy rate in radiographer staffing (31.6 WTE in post vs 44.1 WTE funded posts), mostly at a senior level. This is a national and international problem. This has a significant impact on the number of MR trained and in-training radiographers. In CHI as a whole, there are 75.9 WTE Radiographers in post vs a funded establishment of 97.9 WTE, a 22.5% vacancy rate.
- There is currently a 1:5 MR Radiographer on-call rota as there is a higher rate of vacancies among MRI trained senior Radiographers. It should be 1:10.
- There are currently not enough radiographers available daily to facilitate operation of both scanners as well as train new staff.
- HSE recruitment embargo is significantly hampering the hiring of new staff. We have vacant funded posts.
- Lack of Radiologist capacity to support scanning and report scans - CHI Radiologists are currently down 10 WTE Consultants out of a funded allocation of 24.5 WTE. Recruitment timelines are generally about 12-18 months for suitable candidates (from offer to in post).
- Lack of capacity to undertake MRI scans under General Anaesthetic. These patients require day-ward admission (and sometimes IP admission) which has



been constrained, alongside delays in recruiting Radiology and Anaesthetic Nursing staff.

- Rising demand for MRI. Internationally demand for Radiology rises by ~5% p.a. every year. CHI saw a ~9% increase in demand for MRI during 2023.

Solutions in place or planned, given existing HSE/CHI recruitment embargo:

- Open capacity in the 2nd MRI scanner as much as Radiographer numbers allow. This will be ad-hoc in the short-term, but will increase if CHI at Temple Street can recruit more senior / MR radiographers
- 0.8 WTE Locum Radiologist hopefully starting in March. This is a cross-site post which will provide support for reporting Neuroimaging. Candidates have been offered posts but will not be starting until later in 2024 and into 2025. 1 candidate expected to start this year has withdrawn.
- Day ward capacity has now increased and more General Anaesthetic sessions have been routinely planned. However, this is dependent on Radiographer and Anaesthetic nursing capacity to staff these sessions.
- Demand will continue to rise on a year by year basis. CHI Radiology are also aware that some demand is currently hidden by the lack of MRI capacity (i.e. patients are not referred or new services are not started).

What HSE/ Department of health can assist with: -

- Recruitment embargo - if/when this lifts we will be able to advertise for senior Radiographers, in particular, with an interest in MR.
- Identify and recruit into Anaesthetic nursing posts, which have been funded but remain empty.
- Any national / CHI plan to expand oncology service must take account the effects that this has on other services, including increased demand for MR scanning to diagnose and follow-up an increasing number of patients.
- Any national / CHI plan to expand orthopaedic/scoliosis/ spinal service must take account of the effects that this has on other services, including increasing demand for MR scanning.
- Any national /CHI plans to begin tumour screening programmes must consider the effect on imaging/MR service demands.

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann



Children's Health Ireland

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Yours sincerely

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