



Duncan Smith, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

6th August 2024

PQ: 32882/24

To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of adding asthma to the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 32882/24), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE is unable to provide a robust estimate of the costs of adding Asthma to the Long Term Illness scheme.

In terms of reimbursement costs, the additional costs to provide LTI reimbursement for patients currently receiving supports under other Community Drug Schemes such as the Medical Card Scheme or Drugs Payment Scheme would derive in the main from the loss of the GMS Prescription Charges and the loss of monthly family contributions (currently €80 per family) under the Drugs Payment Scheme. A patient's diagnosis is not collected on prescriptions and therefore is not submitted to the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service as part of the reimbursement data submitted by pharmacy contractors so data is not readily available to carry out a robust analysis to support an estimate. The HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) has grossly estimated that the additional costs above might be of the order of €40m. However, the HSE PCRS would not consider these estimates as robust given the data limitations. The above estimate purely relates to the ingredient, dispensing fees and patient contributions linked to reimbursement.

Additional costs would arise which currently arise as private costs for patients who don't have medical cards and whose monthly family costs are below the current DPS threshold of €80. The HSE does not have visibility on this data as it is private prescription data and is not currently submitted to the HSE. The HSE National Clinical Programme (COPD & Asthma) has stated that Asthma is the most common chronic respiratory disease in Ireland, with approximately 1 in 10 of the population asthmatic. The Asthma Society estimated in June

2019 that 890,000 people in Ireland have had asthma at some point in their life-time, including 380,000 people who experience asthma on an annual basis. This equated to 1 in 13 of the population at that time experiencing asthma on an annual basis and 1 in 5 experiencing it at some point in their lifetime. That would suggest there could be significant sub-threshold costs which the HSE does not have sight of to enable a robust estimate to be made.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Suzanne Doyle
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service