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## BY EMAIL ONLY

Deputy John Paul Phelan  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

19<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**PQ24763/24- Deputy John Paul Phelan-To ask the Minister for Health the services that exist for patients with complex immune deficiencies, autoimmune diseases and allergic disorders given that demands for clinical immunology and allergy services are increasing; his plans to develop these services in line with demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Phelan,

Thank you for your representation.

Patients with complex immune deficiencies, autoimmune diseases and allergic disorders frequently require ongoing multidisciplinary. This is guided by a Consultant Immunologist and the multidisciplinary Immunology Team. These services are currently provided in 3 centres (2 in Dublin and 1 in Galway). Care is supported by General Practitioners and other healthcare services. Where and how the access specific services depends on the specific needs of individual patients at a given time and the age of the patient.

In general, the care of children with complex immune, complex autoimmune diseases and complex allergic disorders is guided by Consultants in Children's Health Ireland in partnership with paediatric services in the Health Regions and Primary Care.

For adult patients with complex immune deficiencies and complex allergic disorders care is generally guided by the Consultant Immunologists which are currently based in Dublin (Beaumont Hospital and St James's Hospital) or in Galway (Galway University Hospital) in partnership other hospitals and with Primary Care.

Adult patients with complex autoimmune disorders affecting multiple organs are usually cared for by Consultant Immunologists and the multidisciplinary Immunology Teams in one of the three centres. Consultant Rheumatologists and Consultants in other specialties and their multidisciplinary teams often care of people with autoimmune disease that primarily impact on a particular organ system.

Laboratory services to provide care for these patient's groups depend heavily on Immunology Laboratory Services even when clinical care is led by other teams.



The following was outlined in the recent reply to PQ 19313/24

The most recent document relating specifically to the development of immunology services is the "REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON IMMUNOLOGY SERVICES" Adopted by Comhairle na nOspidéal at its meeting on 24th November, 2000. Section 6 of the Report (summary of recommendations) has 11. Ten of the 11 recommendations are fully or partially implemented. One recommendation (Recommendation 5) has not been implemented. Recommendation 1. Four supra-regional immunology centres in Ireland. Two centres are recommended for Leinster/Ulster - one centre based in North Dublin and one based in South Dublin to also serve adjacent health boards. The committee also recommends the development of supra regional immunology centres for Munster and Connacht/Donegal to be based in Cork and Galway respectively.

Current status – partially implemented

Immunology services are configured as outlined in the report (delivered from North Dublin, South Dublin and Galway) except that the service in Cork has not been developed.

*Recommendation 2. The North Dublin centre with the major laboratory based at Beaumont Hospital will provide services to the other hospitals in the Northern Area Health Board and the North Eastern Health Board. Two posts are recommended for the centre based at Beaumont – each with sessional commitments to the Mater Hospital. While it is envisaged that the North Dublin immunology centre will undertake a broad spectrum of immunology duties, clinical and laboratory, it is envisaged that the centre will also focus on HLA and Tissue Typing laboratory services based at Beaumont Hospital.*

Current status. Implemented.

The North Dublin centre based at Beaumont has 2 posts Consultant posts ((1.5 whole time equivalent post at present) and a focus on HLA and Tissue Typing and there are sessional commitments to the Mater Hospital.

*Recommendation 3. The South Dublin supra-regional immunology centre with the major laboratory based at St. James's Hospital and staffed by three consultants, will provide services to other hospitals in the East Coast and South Western areas of the ERHA and also to the Midland Health Board and South Eastern Health Board. Each post at St. James's Hospital will have a sessional commitment to one of the major teaching hospitals in the region, i.e. St. Vincent's and Tallaght. The South Dublin immunology centre will undertake a broad spectrum of immunology duties, clinical and laboratory. It is envisaged that it will also focus on white cell, antibody studies and other immunology services.*

Current status. Partly implemented

There are two posts based in St James hospital. Those post do not have sessional commitments to other hospitals

*Recommendation 4. One of the posts of consultant immunologist based at the South Dublin supra-regional immunology centre should have a special interest in paediatric immunology and*



*have a substantial clinical commitment at the children's hospital in Crumlin and a link to the children's unit in Tallaght.*

Current status. Partially implemented

Children's Health Ireland has appointed consultant immunologists (Infectious Disease subspecialty) with an interest in paediatric immunology however no Consultant Immunologist (Clinical and Laboratory) has been appointed.

*Recommendation 5. The development of a supra-regional immunology centre for Munster staffed by two consultants and based at Cork University Hospital will provide services to the Southern Health Board and the Mid-Western Health Board areas.*

Current status. Not implemented. There is no supra-regional service for Munster. The HSE has approved two Consultant Immunologist posts for Cork University Hospital but these posts have not been filled.

*Recommendation 6. The centre for Connacht and Donegal should be staffed initially with one consultant immunologist and based at University College Hospital Galway providing services to the Western Health Board and the North Western Health Board areas. A second post should be considered in due course. The North Western Health Board should consider developing links with the Belfast immunology centre for Donegal patients given that Belfast is less distant than Galway or Dublin.*

Current status. Implemented.

Hospitals of the Western Health Board and North Western Health Board were merged into the Saolta Group. There are two Consultant posts based in Galway.

*Recommendation 7. The IBTS should now review its consultant immunologist requirements and consider a formal link with the South Dublin supra regional centre which is also on the St. James's Hospital campus.*

Effectively implemented in that the purpose achieved as follows. The IBTS has devised a medical model of care for the functions of the organisation. The Histogenetics and Immunogenetics laboratory is co-directed by a Principle Clinical Scientist and a Consultant Hematologist with subspecialist training in Transfusion Medicine. The latter also has a sessional commitment in St. James's Hospital"

*Recommendation 8. The appropriate title to be used henceforth in Ireland will be Consultant Immunologist (clinical and laboratory).*

Current status. Implemented. The title in use is Consultant Immunologist.

Recommendation 9. Revised qualifications have been specified by Comhairle na nOspidéal for posts of Consultant Immunologist (clinical and laboratory) and also for posts with a special interest in paediatric immunology.

Current status. Implemented. The revised qualifications are accepted



Recommendation 10. Allergy services should be provided by consultant immunologists as part of their remit.

Current status. Implemented. Allergy services are provided by Consultant Immunologists

Recommendation 11. There should be a formal accreditation system for laboratories undertaking immunology tests

Current status. Implemented. All immunology laboratories are accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) to the ISO15189 standard

The HSE Executive Management Team adopted terms of reference of development of a strategy for laboratory services as whole (to include immunology laboratory services) in December 2023. The draft strategy document is currently at the stage of broad stakeholder consultation. The document and template for feedback are available at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/lsr/resources/programme-documents-resources.html>

The HSE has not at present commissioned the development of a strategy for Clinical Immunology services.

I hope this provides you with some assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Hayden', written over a thin horizontal line.

Sharon Hayden  
General Manager  
Office of the Chief Clinical Officer