

2nd April 2024

Deputy Louise O'Reilly, TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 10015/24

To ask the Minister for Health how many hospitals have access to a clinical psychologist as part of stroke unit care; if he can provide an update on the funding and staffing of clinical psychology posts in stroke unit care; the costing and funding requirements for clinical psychology posts as part of the National Stroke Strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have consulted with the National Clinical Programme (NCP) for Stroke on your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position.

The Irish National Audit of Stroke (INAS) Organisational Audit Report (2021)¹ describes the organisation of acute hospital stroke services, based on a self-reported questionnaire submitted by all hospitals providing acute stroke services in Ireland in September 2021. This 2021 report reported that five out of the 24 stroke units across the country had access to clinical psychology.

The majority of patients who survive stroke will have some level of physical, cognitive, communicative, psycho-social or emotional disability. Stroke is a condition with high rates of anxiety, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Psychological support is essential to develop evidence-based plans of care to address these issues.

Clinical psychologists have a role in both the acute and longer term adjustment and recovery after stroke, in the acute stages delivering evidence based recovery-focused and patient- and carer-tailored therapy. Provision of psychology services across the continuum of stroke care is important in facilitating a comprehensive assessment that identifies acute and ongoing disorders of cognition and mood, problems with adjustment, relationships and coping and implementing therapeutic interventions to improve psychosocial functioning after stroke and dealing with pain, fear and fatigue. Psychology input also supports the family unit after stroke, helping reduce stress and fear and promoting successful coping and recovery after a significant life event.


The HSE's National Stroke Strategy² aims to improve essential access to psychological supports at acute and post-acute stages of care for stroke survivors through the recruitment of senior clinical psychologists (16.9 WTEs recommended in total) across the lifetime of the strategy, at a total cumulative investment of €1.9 million (based on 2021 October pay cost calculator).

Investment towards implementation of the stroke strategy commenced in 2023.

In 2023, approval was given to recruit two Senior Clinical Psychology WTEs and recruitment campaigns were progressed for these posts. However, there were challenges in successfully recruiting these professionals, due to the well-acknowledged recognition of a current insufficient pool of senior clinical psychologists in Ireland.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Anne Horgan
General Manager

References

1. [Irish National Audit of Stroke Organisational Audit Report 2021](#)
2. [National Stroke Strategy 2022-2027 \(hse.ie\)](#)