

Neasa Hourigan TD
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27th May 2024

Re.

21926/24 - To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide, in tabular form, the total number of people who attended a pigmented lesion rapid access clinic nationally; and the number who were offered an appointment within the recommended timeframe, in each quarter from 2016 to 2024, respectively.

21927/24 - To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide, in tabular form, the total number of people who received a cancer diagnosis via the pigmented lesion rapid access clinic, in each quarter from 2016 to 2024, respectively.

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

PQ 21926/24

Data on the total number of patients who attend the pigmented lesion clinics (PLCs) is not currently recorded by the National Cancer Control Programme. Consequently, it is not possible to robustly comment as to the percentage who were offered an appointment to attend in a timely manner. Work is underway to record this data, but owing to the large number of patients that are referred to the PLC service, the manual capture of this data is not practical and an electronic solution is sought. To this end, the hospital-based clinics are currently in the process of configuring their patient administration systems to accurately record this data electronically.

However, in the absence of attendance data, the number of electronic GP referrals to the Pigmented Lesion Clinics (PLC) for those with a suspicion of skin melanoma sent via the Healthlink GP e-referral system is given as follows:

Healthlink GP Referrals to PLCs	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2024	4,920				4,920
2023	3,796	5,418	5,644	4,202	19,060
2022	2,960	4,181	4,557	3,224	14,922
2021	2,046	2,220	3,696	2,500	10,462
2020	1,159	1,348	2,407	2,217	7,131
2019	1,355	1,639	1,896	1,310	6,200

Please note the following caveats in interpreting this data:

For earlier years, GP referrals to Pigmented Lesion Clinics were less exclusively made electronically and as such the electronic referral data presented here is only a subset of all referral activity.

The increased numbers seen between 2020 and 2023 are strongly influenced by two important factors. Firstly, the additional roll-out and increased uptake of the Healthlink system among GPs and secondly, the addition of more hospitals as they go live with PLC e-referrals; Naas General Hospital (February 2021), Beaumont (October 2021), Mater (March 2023) with Galway due to go live at a later date.

The number of GP referrals made during May/June 2021 will be higher than is shown as GPs switched over to manual means (phone/letter/fax) due to the cyber-attack on the HSE.

The number of people presenting to their GP for a suspicion of skin melanoma is characteristically subject to strong seasonal variation.

The National Cancer Control Programme do not have access to the total number of patients attending each hospital-based Pigmented Lesion Clinic and so cannot comment on the timeliness or proportion of attendances that were referred by electronic means.

PQ 21927/24

The collection of data on the total number of cancers diagnosed via the pigmented lesion clinics is currently in development. At this time, the National Cancer Control Programme cannot give a robust account of this data.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Robert Conway
SPHM Cancer Intelligence (MCRN 411192)
National Cancer Control Programme

