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Colm Burke, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

10th April 2025

PQ: 16130/25

To ask the Minister for Health the progress made to alleviate the pressure that pharmacist staff at the HSE corporate pharmaceutical unit (CPU) are working under because of resource challenges; the total current personnel numbers for the CPU (including whole-time equivalent data) and comparative data for March 2024 and March 2023; the plans that exist to address resource challenges; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Colm Burke

Dear Deputy Burke,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 16130/25), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Under the National Service Plan (NSP) 2024, an additional 10 WTE were approved and 8 of these posts have been recruited and accepted. This includes the Head of CPU vacancy. There are 2 clerical posts to be progressed, however the HSE PCRS has been prioritising filling the technical posts.

The new posts filled include a number of roles where existing internal candidates were successful in open recruitment competitions and this resulted in vacancies in their previous roles within CPU. The HSE PCRS complies with all HSE recruitment and pay & numbers governance requirements.

The HSE PCRS has engaged with HSE Senior Leadership and has been authorised to replace existing vacancies in the Corporate Pharmaceutical Unit. Therefore, the HSE is progressing campaigns to fill existing vacant posts at Chief II Pharmacist grade and this recruitment campaign is currently ongoing.

The HSE CPU will continue to recruit the additional resources during 2025.

The table below illustrates the headcount within the HSE Corporate Pharmaceutical Unit (CPU) in March of each year from 2023 to date.

Year	2025	2024	2023
Headcount	17*	12.6*	13

**Inclusive of posts where post holders are on maternity leave*

As of March 2025, there are currently 2 staff on maternity leave in the HSE CPU. A further staff member is expected to commence maternity leave in April 2025.

The HSE CPU is currently operating at full available capacity and continues to prioritise working on the receipt and progressing of new medicines applications and the productivity work streams committed to under NSP 2025. The work streams of the HSE CPU are resource intensive and require technical staff with significant experience and expertise to ensure optimal outcomes. In 2023, 104 commercial meetings were held, increasing to 106 in 2024. It is expected that this volume of commercial meetings will continue in 2025.

The Pricing and Reimbursement (P&R) Application Tracker was launched in December 2024. This is a publically accessible database, available at: <https://www.sspcrs.ie/portal/rdt/pub/application/home>. The purpose of the P&R Application Tracker is to increase information accessibility and transparency of the pricing and reimbursement process of medicines in Ireland. The P&R Application Tracker captures the current status of medicine applications as they navigate through the standard HSE pricing and reimbursement application process, to provide a complete timeline for each medicine.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Doyle
Primary Care Reimbursement Service

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services Scheme, which includes Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to the status of Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards applications, which the Deputy / Senator may wish to use for an earlier response. Tel: 01-8647180 / email: Oireachtas.pcrs@hse.ie