



Ref: PQs 16533/25, 16535/25, 16522/25, 16523/25, 16524/25, 16527/25, 16528/25, 16530/25, 16531/25, 16532/25, 16537/25

29th April 2025

Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Cullinane

I refer to your series of Parliamentary Questions below relating to Vertebral Body Tethering procedures in Children's Health Ireland (CHI).

PQ 16533/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if the tethering devices used in vertebral body tethering procedures comply with EU Medical Device Regulations and relevant Irish safety standards.

PQ 16535/25 – To ask the Minister for Health how the procurement process for vertebral body tethering devices and associated implants has been managed; the suppliers that have been contracted to provide these devices; and whether procurement has followed HSE and EU Medical Device Regulations.

PQ 16522/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if vertebral body tethering (VBT) surgery is formally approved for funding by the HSE; if not, the funding mechanisms under which any previous VBT procedures have been covered; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 16523/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if vertebral body tethering (VBT) surgeries are being reimbursed under broader categories such as spinal fusion or spinal instrumentation despite being a distinct, motion-preserving procedure; and if she will provide details of any plans to establish a dedicated funding stream for VBT.

PQ 16524/25 – To ask the Minister for Health the number of vertebral body tethering surgeries that have been performed in Children's Health Ireland hospitals to date.

PQ 16527/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if a charity (Straight Ahead) has facilitated or performed any vertebral body tethering surgeries to date. Deputy David Cullinane

PQ 16528/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if any research on vertebral body tethering is being conducted or has been completed in Children's Health Ireland; if so, the scope of this research; and whether any findings have been published.

Children's Health Ireland at Connolly | Crumlin | Tallaght | Temple Street

Our Mission is to: Promote and provide child-centred, research-led and learning informed healthcare, to the highest standards of safety and excellence. We will do this in partnership with each other, with children, young people and their families through a network of children's services in Ireland.

CRA Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20202295 **Revenue Charitable Status CHY:** 22235

Board Members: Prof James Browne (Chairman), Ms Mary Cryan, Ms Mary Donovan, Ms Catherine Guy, Dr Gavin Lavery, Ms Brigid McManus, Ms Eleanor O'Neill



PQ 16530/25 – To ask the Minister for Health how the HSE ensures that outcomes from vertebral body tethering surgeries are accurately tracked and monitored in the absence of a spine register.

PQ 16531/25 – To ask the Minister for Health how the HSE is tracking and collecting safety and performance data for vertebral body tethering surgeries, given that there is no specific ICD-10-AM/ACHI/ACS code for this procedure.

PQ 16532/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if the lack of a distinct coding system for vertebral body tethering is affecting the ability to audit and assess patient outcomes; and the steps being taken to introduce an appropriate classification system.

PQ 16537/25 – To ask the Minister for Health the steps HIQA and the HSE are taking to ensure oversight, patient safety, and regulatory compliance regarding the use of vertebral body tethering in Ireland.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

I note that you have asked for information about tracking and monitoring Vertebral Body Tethering procedures, where they are performed, how many are performed, funding mechanisms, if charitable funding is involved, research, safety, audits, assessments, procurement, oversight, patient safety, and regulatory compliance regarding the use of vertebral body tethering in Ireland. The quantity and sudden and ambiguous nature of these PQs have given me some cause for concern, and I wish to explicitly understand the nature of the perceived issue with VBT in CHI. If you are aware of concerns or disclosures about VBT practices, I will make myself available to discuss these directly with you to ensure full and formal oversight of any issues raised.

The level of PQs, media queries and other stakeholder requests received by the Spinal Surgery Management Unit means that a significant amount of time and effort of numerous staff members is needed to respond. It is my hope that we can prioritise these resources for direct patient care. I appreciate, Deputy Cullinane, that you pay critical attention to Children's Health Ireland's spinal services, therefore I would like to arrange to meet with you to brief you directly about any aspect of the service that you wish to know more about – waiting lists, waiting times, surgery abroad, etc.

If you wish to set up this briefing, please contact me directly by email at david.moore@childrenshealthireland.ie

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann



Children's Health Ireland

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Yours sincerely

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