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Pádraig O'Sullivan, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

23rd April 2025

PQ: 17365/25

To ask the Minister for Health the value of drugs, particularly orphan drugs, that go unused for one reason or another per annum; the way her Department is attempting to limit the wastage and number of medicines that expired unused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Pádraig O'Sullivan

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 17365/25), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE PCRS would not hold records on unused and expired medicines including Orphan drugs.

The Community Pharmacy Contractor Agreement, Clause 9(4) sets out that pharmacies should examine the rational and cost effective use of the medicine prescribed, including the choice of the medicine and the potential for wastage. Administrative arrangements in place for the various Community Drug Schemes only permits one month as a maximum to be supplied at a time.

High cost medicines, namely biologics fall under the High Tech Arrangements. The High Tech Ordering and Management System (High Tech Hub) was introduced in 2017 and is managed by PCRS High Tech Co-ordination Unit. All High Tech medicines available for ordering through the High Tech Hub must be ordered through that medium to be reimbursed by the HSE. It allows for ordering on a just in time basis for named patients. Unlike other medicines on the Reimbursement List provided under Community Drug Schemes which are procured by the community pharmacy, the cost of the medicines under High Tech Arrangements are paid by the PCRS.

The High Tech Ordering and Management System allows the following:

- Data captured can be utilised to improve medication management and prescribing behaviour for High Tech medicines.

- Provision of transparency and assurance across the high tech process resulting in enhanced governance and control.
- Tracking of prescription from issue to dispatch of High Tech medication.
- Pharmacies have instant access to the high tech prescription.
- Central submission point for patient details and High Tech prescriptions.

Furthermore, across all medicines the HSE PCRS has controls in place to ensure reimbursement claims raised by community pharmacy contractors are appropriate, valid and not excessive.

The HSE, individual pharmacies and Pharmacists are required to comply with all medicines legislation in the performance of their duties.

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