



Ivana Bacik, TD  
Labour Party  
Leinster House  
Kildare St  
Dublin 2

Email: [ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie](mailto:ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie)

24<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**PQ No: 4165/25**

**To ask the Minister for Health her views on reports that four linear accelerators in Dublin, Cork and Galway were not in use in Autumn 2024 due to staffing shortages; and the position regarding these linear accelerators now. Deputy Ivana Bacik**

Dear Deputy Bacik

Please find the response to your questions from all public Radiotherapy facilities in the table below as requested.

New radiation oncology centres are opened in CUH, Cork and in UHG, Galway.

**Cork:**

The 5 Linear Accelerators in CUH were in constant use over the Autumn 2024, 4 clinically treating patients and the 5<sup>th</sup> working through a significant QA programme and a commissioning programme to deliver new advanced technology Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy (SABR) or Stereotactic Radiosurgery (SRS) treatment services now in place.

**Galway:**

The 4 Linear Accelerators in CUH were in constant use over the Autumn 2024, 3 clinically treating patients and the 4<sup>th</sup> working through a significant QA programme and a commissioning programme to deliver SBAR/SRS services now in place.

The equipment in SLRON is old. An equipment replacement programme is underway for SLRON as well as a major expansion of the facilities at the Beaumont Centre located on the site at Beaumont Hospital.

**SLRON:**

All 14 Linear Accelerators in SLRON were in constant use over the Autumn 2024. The aged equipment in SLRON - past its recommended end-of-life - requires an intense equipment maintenance schedule and regular and protracted unplanned machine breakdowns. The additional linacs are used to treat patients who are scheduled for treatment on a linac that is broken down or being serviced/QA/commissioning work. This activity reduces patients' waiting times, reduces interruptions/gaps in patients' treatment and minimises the extension of overall treatment times – also having a positive impact on start dates for subsequent patients. The additional linac is also used to treat additional patients e.g. paediatric patients often requiring general anaesthetic and long treatment session times or emergency palliative patients.

The following **mitigation measures** are in place:

- The NCCP's Radiation Oncology Working Group (ROWG) and Capacity Groups meet approximately every month. "National Updates" is a specific agenda item at this meeting that focuses on staff deficits, KPI performance, demand, capacity, mitigations, risks and issues.
- An incentivised over-time service is utilised in each of the public RT departments.
- Public Radiotherapy centres out-source selected patients based on clinical indications to private radiotherapy facilities.
- Hypofractionation (reduced number of treatments in a course of radiation therapy) has been implemented when clinically appropriate in all radiotherapy departments as per national clinical guidelines.
- The equipment in SLRON is old. An equipment replacement programme is underway for SLRON as well as a major expansion of the facilities at the Beaumont Centre located on the site at Beaumont Hospital.
- New radiation oncology centres are opened in Cork and in Galway.
- The National Radiation Therapist Review Report was completed in 2024. Recommendations of this review include opportunities to improve staff recruitment and retention including for example the implementation of new roles such as advanced practice and aide roles and reviewing the grading structure for the Radiation Therapists profession e.g. seniors and director of R.T.

Yours sincerely,

**Fiona Bonas**  
**Assistant National Director**

