



Deputy Barry Heneghan
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

14th April 2025

PQ 8934/25 - To ask the Minister for Health to address a year-to-year decline in the national ophthalmology workforce between December 2023 and December 2024, in both acute and community services; if actions will be taken in response to this worrying trend; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Barry Heneghan

Dear Deputy Heneghan,

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

The HSE is committed to delivering efficient high-quality ophthalmology services to all eligible service users. In 2024, there were 108,641 patients seen by HSE ophthalmology services in primary care, an 8% increase on the previous year.

The data included has been provided by colleagues in National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) programme. The NDTP leads in the provision of key information and analysis of the medical workforce. The data was extracted from DIME (Doctors Integrated Management E-system) with a run date of 31st December 2023 and 31st December 2024.

DIME is dependent on clinical sites inputting details on their consultant workforce and therefore there may be variances and gaps in the data supplied to that held within clinical sites. As DIME is a live system it must be noted that there can be variances in the figures published dependent on the run date of the report as entries can be made with a retrospective date.

Total number of Consultants in employment (by headcount) in the specialty of Ophthalmology at year end 2023 and 2024		
Specialty	2023	2024
Medical Ophthalmology	12	15
Ophthalmic Surgery	58	69
Total	70	84

**Includes incumbents filling CAAC (Consultant Applications Advisory Committee) approved and unapproved posts.*

Source: NDTP, DIME system, April, 2025



In this regard it is worth noting that the staffing complement has increased as part of the funding provided to implement multidisciplinary community-based Integrated Eye Care teams within the HSE.

These teams facilitate assessment, prioritisation, diagnoses, management and treatment and in some cases pre-op/post-op care, and where required, refer patients to Acute Ophthalmology Services. This enables most patients to be seen in their own locality, and when required, referral for specialist care.

In addition, the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology have provided 2024 Modernised Care Pathways Programme (MCP) advising the following:

The MCP Programme is a multi-annual, structured initiative contributing to the transformation of Ireland's scheduled care system. By shifting care from acute hospitals to consultant-led, multidisciplinary teams, often in the community, the programme seeks to reduce waiting times, optimise hospital capacity and improve patient experiences. This model aligns with the Sláintecare health reform programme, ensuring that patients receive timely and effective care closer to home.

The MCP Programme represents a transformational shift in Ireland's healthcare delivery model, proving that consultant led, multidisciplinary delivered care in the hospital and community setting can significantly improve efficiency, accessibility and patient experiences. With continued investment and strategic refinement, Modernised Care Pathways can become a cornerstone of Ireland's long-term healthcare reform efforts, ensuring sustainable, high-quality and patient-centred care.

The implementation of MCPs harnesses clinical leadership, best practice and innovation from across the country and enables staff to work to the top of their licence, offering career progression opportunities and harnessing multi-disciplinary teams working across both community and acute services.

The MCP Implementation Programme is being led and coordinated nationally by the Strategic Programmes Office (SPO), Office of the Chief Clinical Officer, providing a programmatic approach to drive the national roll out of pathways and support the healthcare professionals and operational implementation partners delivering the pathways on the ground in acute and community settings.

Three patient pathways have been the focus of MCP funding in ophthalmology: paediatrics, cataract and medical retina.

I trust this is of assistance to you.

Nessa Lynch
General Manager
Access and Integration

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