



Ref: PQ 10755/25

06th May 2025

Deputy Paul Murphy
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Murphy

I refer to your parliamentary question below which has been forwarded to me for attention. Firstly, please accept my apologies for the delay in issuing a response.

PQ 10755/25 – To ask the Minister for Health if she is aware of the numerous cases of children with scoliosis who have faced various challenges with appointments postponed, changed, delayed or cancelled at the last minute; how the Minister will address this; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

Inpatient cancellations

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) understands it is very disappointing when a surgery date is changed or cancelled, and that it is very disruptive for the families affected. While our aim is always to avoid cancellations where we can, it is often unavoidable - children get sick, emergencies take priority, ICU beds may not be available. Patient safety is our main priority. Theatre schedules are, by their nature, often changed at very short notice to create access for the most urgent cases. Spinal surgery is afforded the highest priority in CHI theatres.

For inpatients, all cancellations and reasons for cancellation are tracked through a patient administration system.

CHI total "Spinal Fusion" and "Spinal Other" cancellations: 57 (Jan -14th March 2025).

- The majority of these spinal patients had their procedure cancelled to facilitate another spinal patient who needed access more urgently.

CHI total "Spinal Fusion" and "Spinal Other" cancellations, not replaced by another spinal case: 15.

- This includes five procedures cancelled due to Storm Eowyn in January 2025.

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



Outpatient cancellations

Reasons for cancelled outpatient appointments are not tracked in the same way as inpatient cancellations, but reasons include:

- Competing priorities for consultants, such as being required to do surgery rather than a planned outpatient clinic.
- More urgent cases taking precedence for appointments.
- Overbooking.
- Personal reasons for team members.

The demand for spinal outpatient services outweighs current capacity. Therefore, priority appointments are given to the most urgent patients, whether they are new patients, deteriorating current patients or postoperative review patients.

Additional resources allocated to CHI's Spinal Surgery Management Unit means that we have been able to see over 600 new patients in Saturday clinics, carried out each month.

As new Consultants are appointed (this process is ongoing) outpatient cancellations will be reduced. However, cancellations are a feature of healthcare that will never be eliminated completely.

Yours sincerely

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Clinical Lead for Spinal Services

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