



FSS an Iarthair agus an Iarthuaiscirt
HSE West and North West

Bainisteoir Limistéar Sláinte Comhtháite
Sligeach, Liatroim, Dhún na nGall Theas, Chabháin Thiar,
Aras na mBricí Dearga, Páirc Gnó Fhionasclainn,
Sligeach F91 H2VR

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3rd April, 2025.

Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare St.,
Dublin 2.

RE: PQ/12967/25 - To ask the Minister for Health the supports and services currently available on a State-wide basis for people suffering with fibromyalgia; the details of the specific provisions in the north west, including any planned expansions or improvements to service delivery in the area; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Mac Lochlainn,

The HSE has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the above parliamentary question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. We have consulted with the National Clinical Programme for Rheumatology in relation to your question and have been informed that the following outlines the position:

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain or nociplastic condition¹. It is estimated to have a worldwide prevalence of 2%. It is classified in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as chronic primary pain.

Fibromyalgia is characterised by widespread pain in the soft tissues (such as muscles, tendons, etc.) around the joints. It is commonly associated with symptoms including fatigue, brain fog, poor sleep, impaired physical function and mood disorders. Fibromyalgia has a broad clinical spectrum ranging from minor pain symptoms, with a good quality of life, to severe intrusive symptoms, with a poor quality of life.

Diagnosis is based on clinical examination and by the exclusion of other conditions that might cause similar symptoms. There is currently no recognised cure for fibromyalgia. The current general systematic plan for fibromyalgia sufferers is to provide treatment to ease symptoms. This treatment comprises a combination of exercise or other movement therapies (e.g. physiotherapy), education, psychological support and medication.

Services such as diagnosis and treatment can be delivered in primary care. Patients may sometimes be referred to secondary care for confirmation of diagnosis by a Specialist Consultant Rheumatologist but this is not necessary in most cases. Patient may also be

referred to secondary care to access services such as physiotherapy, psychology or pain management programmes when these services are not readily available at primary care level.

In relation to HSE North West, the specialist input for the diagnosis and management of fibromyalgia is provided by the Rheumatology services based at Sligo University Hospital/Our Lady's Hospital Manorhamilton (OLHM), Co. Leitrim, with a network of outreach clinics at Mayo University Hospital and Letterkenny University Hospital. Patients with fibromyalgia are seen in our outpatient clinics. We have no specific service expansion planned for patients with this specific condition.

Details of Northwest Rheumatology service is as follows:

The Acute Rheumatology Unit is a very busy and progressive Regional Centre led by three Consultant Rheumatologists. Patients are referred from Donegal, Sligo, and Leitrim, parts of Mayo, Cavan, Roscommon and Longford (approx. 250k population) and are currently seen in clinics either in Sligo or Manorhamilton hospitals. Current facilities include:-

- 6 beds available (in OLHM) for 5 day admissions.
- There is also a 10-bay day ward for procedure clinics where rheumatology infusions are carried out. Coupled with this are a number of medical day patients who have been transferred from Sligo University Hospital for infusion therapies, resulting in additional capacity in SUH for surgical day cases.
- A dedicated Physiotherapy service (1.5 WTE) and Occupational Therapy service (1 WTE plus 0.5 replacement post in application)
- There is also a clinical specialist physiotherapist (CSP) attached to the service for 2 clinics per week as part of the National Rheumatology/Musculo-skeletal Clinical programme. (4 CSP)
- The unit has an active Consultant Led Osteoporosis clinic as well as a DXA (bone density) scanning (approx. 1300 scans per year)
- The Outpatient Department is allocated to a number of disciplines from SUH.

I hope this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

John Fitzmaurice,
Integrated Health Area Manager,
HSE West and North West.



References:

1. Fitzcharles, M. A. et al. (2021) *"Nociplastic pain: towards an understanding of prevalent pain conditions"*, The Lancet, Vol. 397, Issue 10289, 2098 – 2110
2. Royal College of Physicians (RCP) London (2022) *The diagnosis of fibromyalgia syndrome*, UK clinical guidelines.