



BY EMAIL ONLY

Deputy Ken O'Flynn
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

31st October 2025

PQ48357/25- To ask the Minister for Health the proportion of older adults reporting chronic pain who currently receive pain management treatment under the public health system; the specialised pain services that exist at HSE level; and whether gaps identified by a report (details supplied) will be addressed in the upcoming service plan

Dear Deputy O'Flynn,

Thank you for your representation.

According to the most recent figures supplied by the HPO for 2024, the number of patients who underwent treatment for chronic pain in the public hospital service was 5279. Of this number 1403 were aged over 65 years (proportion = 26.57%).

TILDA (The Irish Longitudinal Data on Aging) No 6, published 2025, has a key finding that 'one-third of older adults reported chronic pain, yet two-thirds of those with moderate to severe symptoms received no pain-relieving medication'.

TILDA No6 also states that – 'Effective management of chronic pain involves both pharmacological and non-pharmacological strategies. Therapies such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), mindfulness and graded exercise programs have been shown to improve mood, function, and coping - even when pain cannot be completely eliminated.'

It should be noted that dependence on pain medication for treatment, especially on a long-term basis, carries risks and possibly undesirable side-effects. Pain medication, particularly on a long-term basis, may not be the optimum or preferred treatment.

A survey published in 2021 established that there were 16 hospitals across the public health service in Ireland providing a chronic pain management service consisting of 36 weekly chronic pain OPD clinics. This survey indicated that the prevalence of chronic pain in general in the Irish population is up to 36% (Purcell et al, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8191436/>).

The Model of Care for Pain is currently being developed by the National Clinical Programme for Anaesthesia (NCPA), and is due to be published in 2026. This Model of Care envisages an



expansion of services for chronic pain based on a 'hub and spoke' arrangement in each Regional Health Area, coupled with an integration of community-based and hospital-based care for the management of chronic pain conditions as per the recommendations of Sláintecare.

I hope this provides you with some assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Michael Dockery', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Michael Dockery, FCAI, FRCA, FFPMRCA

Ainéistéisí Comhairleach | Consultant Anaesthetist

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