



Príomhoifigeach Cliniciúil
Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Cliniciúil

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Deputy Willie O'Dea
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

9th October 2025

PQ51082/25-To ask the Minister for Health her plans to deal with the delays in completing coronial autopsies caused by the severe shortage of pathologists in the mid-west; her plans to deal with the proposed withdrawal of coronial autopsies from the end of 2025 in the south east; and if she will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy O'Dea,

Many thanks for your representation.

Coronial autopsies are performed at the request of and on behalf of the coroner. The Coronial service is within the portfolio of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. The performance of Coronial post-mortem examinations is not a contractual obligation of the Consultant Histopathologists employed by the HSE. In the past, most Consultant Histopathologists employed by the HSE have voluntarily undertaken to provide autopsy services to the Coroner. This is discretionary work performed in addition to their HSE appointment. The HSE facilitates and supports the Consultants in performance of this work however the Consultants are engaged and report to the Coroner on this work and do not report on this work to the HSE.

This traditional arrangement is becoming progressively less satisfactory. Increasingly Pathologists who are employed to work in the Health Service choose not to undertake additional discretionary work performing post mortems on behalf of the Coroner for a variety of reasons.

A public consultation has been ongoing in the last year on all aspects of the service. The HSE has made a submission to that consultation highlighting the growing challenges with the traditional arrangements and proposing some solutions to ensure that there is a body of Consultants, support teams and facilities to support the Coronial service into the future.

I hope this provides you with some assistance.

Yours sincerely
Martin Cormican MCRN 011105
Acting Chief Clinical Officer
Office of the Chief Clinical Officer