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Re. **PQ 33775/22: To ask the Minister for Health the way in which cancer patients will be enabled to participate in clinical trials as per the HSE Service Plan 2022; the resources and channels which will be dedicated to this initiative; and the percentage of cancer patients expected to be enrolled in clinical trials as a result of this initiative.**

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

In line with National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 the HSE National Service Plan 2022 resources is intended to support hospitals in enabling patient access to therapeutic clinical trials. The initial steps in the early to mid-term implementation of National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 is focussed on addressing workforce gaps. The NCCP will continue to work with key stakeholders, including Clinicians, Hospitals, Academia, the DoH and the HRB to enable clinical trials in Ireland. The National Cancer Information System (NCIS) will support the gathering of cancer clinical trial activity as it is rolled out across the publicly funded cancer services.

Clinical trials can offer patients the opportunity to access the newest available treatments, which may not otherwise be available. Access to trials should be equitable and easy for patients. A key recommendation of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 is to increase patient participation in clinical trials with a specific target of enrolling 6% of patients with cancer on therapeutic trials annually, currently approximately 3% of all patients with cancer in Ireland take part in a clinical trial.

The delivery of clinical trials requires a dedicated multi-disciplinary workforce and appropriate infrastructure. It is recognised that change is required across our cancer services to give effect to the Strategy vision. The early to mid-term implementation of National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 is focussed on addressing workforce gaps. The National Service Plans of 2021 and 2022 were focussed on addressing these gaps in addition to implementing new services.

Funding for clinical trials in Ireland is from a variety of sources such as, national state funding through the Health Research Board (HRB), charitable partners such as the Irish Cancer Society (ICS) and pharmaceutical industry. The state invested HRB funding has been the dominant driver of the growth of clinical trials in Ireland. In 2020, the HRB restructured its funding model for cancer clinical trials and launched a new national funding call for cancer trials in Ireland, which is intended to support the establishment of a number of Cancer Clinical trial Groups and an overarching National Cancer Clinical Trials Network with the aim of enabling the development and delivery of a high-quality portfolio of cancer clinical trials. To support this, in 2021 the HRB opened a new 5-year grant cycle awarding ~€21 million, and funding began in January 2022

The HSE is also continuing to work with the hospital groups and networks to ensure that clinical cancer research, and the staff who deliver it, become a fully integrated component of cancer care delivery. One step in this is the recently launched model NCCP Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy (SACT) Model of Care which recommends that clinical trial services should be enhanced/developed in SACT services to support the availability of trials to all patients undergoing SACT. Work is commencing on the implementation of this Model of Care. Additionally the NCCP has developed a NCCP Hospital Pharmacy Services Planning Framework which identifies the need for pharmacist support in the area of clinical trials.

The NCCP is also initiating the support of data collection of trial activity in the publicly funded hospitals thorough the National Cancer Information System.

Further information on clinical trials in cancer and their funding is available at <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/all-funding-schemes/grant/cancer-trials-in-ireland-2021/> , <https://www.hrb.ie/news/press-releases/single-press-release/article/hrb-investment-of-e21-million-in-cancer-clinical-trials-will-transform-cancer-care-in-ireland/#:~:text=16%20December%202021-,HRB%20investment%20of%20%E2%82%AC22%20million%20in%20cancer%20clinical%20trials,expertise%20required%20to%20conduct%20them.> , <https://www.cancertrials.ie/> and <https://www.cancer.ie/cancer-research/researchers-hub/closed-funding-calls/hrci-hrb-joint-funding-scheme-2022-translational-biomedical-research-areas-of-unmet-need-in-cancer>

Yours sincerely



Professor Risteárd Ó Laoide
National Director
National Cancer Control Programme

