



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
Clár Cúraim Pobail Feabhsaithe &
Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte

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Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

31st October 2023

PQ47957/23 - To ask the Minister for Health for an update on the hepatitis C home testing kits; the number of kits that have been dispatched; if the scheme is proving successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan,

I refer to your parliamentary question, which was passed to the HSE for response.

The HSE established a National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme (NHCTP) in 2015 and began the process of providing treatment for hepatitis C using Directly Acting Antivirals (DAA's) to patients prioritised according to clinical need. Since 2016, the HSE in its National Service Plans has committed to the continued implementation of a multi annual public health plan for the therapeutic treatment of hepatitis C. Since 2015 the National Hepatitis C Treatment programme has provided treatment to over 7,000 patients treated. It is estimated at least 50-60% of the potential number of people in Ireland with hepatitis C are not aware of their diagnosis and therefore in order for the Programme to achieve its aim of making hepatitis C a rare disease by 2026, the focus has turned to identifying the population and case finding.

Achieving this aim will require identification and treatment of the majority of chronically infected individuals in the community. In this regard, the home testing kit for hepatitis C was launched on the 5 April 2023 along with a proactive media campaign to promote the new service and the awareness of hepatitis C and the need to 'get tested and treated'. The service is currently in the process of initiating the second phase of the advertising campaign.

As of 1 November 4532 home testing kits have been dispatched. From November, the use of OraQuick swabs will be offered as an alternative test to a blood test to users who have advised that taking blood was a barrier to them returning their testing kit.

This new service will enable hepatitis C testing to become more available throughout Ireland. To our knowledge, Ireland is the first country to establish a publicly funded home testing service for hepatitis C. The referral pathway is running very smoothly and feedback from patients has been very positive.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,



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