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22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024

Re. **PQ13790/24: To ask the Minister for Health the average waiting time between cancer diagnosis and the commencement of chemotherapy treatment (details supplied), in each of the past ten years, in tabular form.**

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) collects limited summary data on systemic anti-cancer therapy (SACT). The NCCP cannot comment directly on the number of patients currently waiting to access chemotherapy or the average waiting time as SACT treatment data is retrospectively collected by the NCCP. However, for those patients who started SACT treatment in 2023 the 15 working day treatment key performance indicator (KPI) was 87%. Wait times longer than this are most often related to medical reasons rather than capacity.

SACT KPI: For patients receiving a new parenteral systemic therapy in the day ward setting, the recommended timeline standard between the date that it is agreed that the patient is deemed ready to treat and the administration of the new parenteral systemic therapy will not exceed 15 working days. The recommended target for operational compliance is 90%, as approximately 10% of patients can be expected to have more complex needs that confound or delay treatment.

The number of patients who received a new parenteral systemic therapy in the day ward setting and proportion who commenced treatment within 15 days working days of a) receiving a finalised treatment plan (up to Feb-18) or b) being deemed ready to treat (Mar-18 onwards), or those outside of target by reason of personal choice is tabulated as follows:

Medical Oncology	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	5,743	6,831	6,995	7,219	7,241	8,252	7,683	8,147	8,506	8,973
Met	4,895	6,134	6,330	6,396	6,373	7,304	6,890	7,040	7,285	7,640
KPI	86%	91%	92%	90%	89%	90%	90%	87%	87%	87%

Please note: Data for each of the past ten years 2014 to 2023 inclusive is included. Data for 2024 is incomplete and not included.

New parenteral systemic therapy means a new patient starting a regimen, or a patient starting a new regimen who previously had cancer or a patient who has had a change in regimen that involves additional new drugs.

New parenteral systemic therapy excludes patients who are on their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle, even if new to the hospital, and patients who reduce the number of drugs used in the regimen.

Please note the following caveats when interpreting the data:

- SACT treatment of new patients starting systemic parenteral treatment in the day ward setting is only a small subset of overall chemotherapy activity i.e. it does not include patients continuing treatment or any patients on Oral Anti-cancer Medications (OAMs).
- Parenteral SACT day ward activity that was outsourced to private facilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020/2021 may not be included in these figures.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Robert Conway  
SPHM Cancer Intelligence (MCRN 411192)  
National Cancer Control Programme

