



Ref: PQ 15589/24

2nd May 2024

Deputy Duncan Smith
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Smith

I refer to your below parliamentary question which has been forwarded to me for attention.

PQ 15589/24 – To ask the Minister for Health the number of filled genetic counsellor posts in the cancer genetics department in CHI at Crumlin; how this compares to international standards; whether there are recruitment plans; if any recruitment challenges exist; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

The Genetic Counselling team in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin provides a comprehensive genetic and genomic medicine service for all Rare Disease including assessing those for inherited cancer predisposition syndromes (diagnostic and predictive). The service is offered to all patients throughout their life time (including prenatal testing and reproductive choices). To achieve this specialist care, Genetic Counsellors in CHI deliver a mixed caseload across both cancer and non-cancer.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin can advise that there are 12.9 WTE funded Genetic Counsellor posts in CHI. This complement includes 3 posts allocated in 2023 through the National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine in Ireland. Currently, 7.9 WTE Genetic Counsellor posts are filled, with recruitment into vacant posts affected by the ongoing HSE recruitment embargo. It is anticipated that recruitment into the National Strategy posts assigned as critical posts in CHI, will progress in the coming weeks.

The number of Genetic Counsellors in Ireland is significantly lower when compared to International countries, and falls below the Royal College of Physicians UK recommendation of 6-12 genetic counsellors per million population (Abacan et al. 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41431-018-0252-x>).

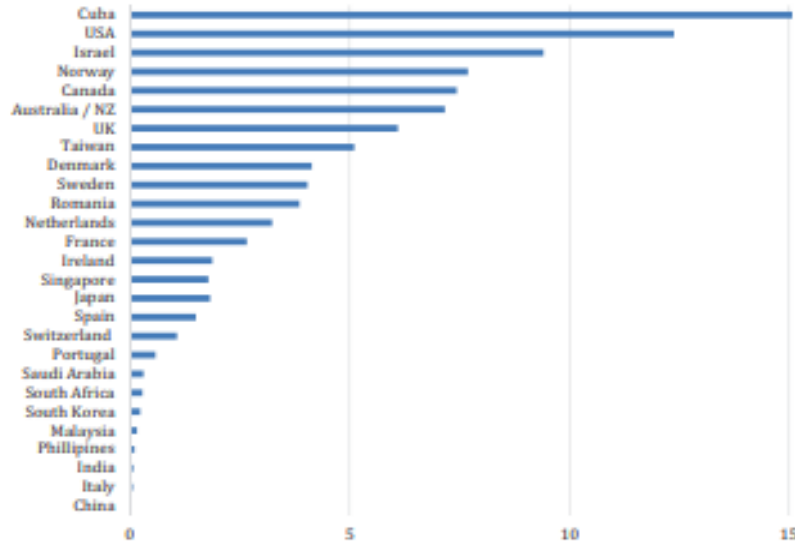


Fig. 2 Trained genetic counselors per million population based on country population and estimated number of genetic counselors. (Assumes all trained genetic counselors are practicing clinically, which may significantly overestimate calculations in several countries, particularly the US and Canada where 1/3–1/4 do not regularly see patients. Cuba data is >75/million). Only a handful of countries come close to achieving the workforce recommendation, made by the Royal College of Physicians UK to have 6–12 genetic counselors/million population [48].

Yours sincerely

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