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15/05/2024

Deputy Murphy
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 18902/24: To ask the Minister for Health the number of patients who have applied for treatment to date in 2024 under the publicly funded fertility treatment scheme.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Representation, which you submitted to the National Women’s and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

A commitment to “introduce a publicly funded model of care for fertility treatment” is included in the Programme for Government. The Model of Care for Fertility was developed by the Department of Health in conjunction with the HSE’s National Women and Infants Health Programme in order to ensure that fertility-related issues are addressed through the public health system at the lowest level of clinical intervention necessary.

This Model of Care comprises three stages, starting in primary care (i.e., GPs) and extending into secondary care (i.e., Regional Fertility Hubs) and then, where necessary, tertiary care (i.e., IVF (in-vitro fertilisation), ICSI (intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection) and other advanced AHR treatments), with public patients being referred onwards through structured pathways.

Patients are referred by their GPs to their Regional Fertility Hub (RFH) for fertility assessment and investigation. A range of treatments and interventions, including relevant blood tests, semen analysis, assessment of tubal patency, hysteroscopy, laparoscopy, fertility-related surgeries, ovulation induction and follicle tracking are available at regional hub level.

Many patients presenting with fertility challenges can be managed successfully at this level of intervention and as such will not require further advanced tertiary treatment such as IVF. These hubs are located in the National Maternity Hospital, The Rotunda Hospital, The Coombe Hospital, Cork University Maternity Hospital, Galway University Hospital and Nenagh General Hospital. All six regional hubs are operational.

Patients cannot apply for IVF or associated IVF funding directly through a GP, nor can GPs refer patients for IVF to one of the six HSE regional fertility hubs. Rather GPs can refer for a fertility assessment with a public fertility team led by a public consultant with expertise in the area of reproductive medicine.

Once a patient has been assessed and +/- treated within one of the six regional fertility hubs and if then clinically indicated for more advanced fertility treatment like IVF and if they meet the national access criteria for such publicly funded treatment as defined by the Department, each of the six public hubs can make a referral for that advanced treatment to a HSE authorised private provider, with the patients choosing which provider they wish to attend.

As of 10th May 2024, 611 couples have been referred by a Reproductive Specialist Consultant for advanced human reproductive services (IUI/IVF/ICSI) following extensive investigations and +/- secondary level treatment within the regional fertility hubs. Once a full referral is received by the private provider patients will be seen within 6 weeks with treatment commencing no more than 6 weeks thereafter.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



MaryJo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme