



Ref: PQ 56763/23

23th April 2024

Deputy Brian Stanley
Dáil Eireann
Dublin 2

Dear Deputy Stanley

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

PQ 56763/23 – To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide accurate resources for genetic testing for rare diseases at Our Lady's Childrens Hospital, Crumlin; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Details supplied: For the purpose of this PQ Deputy Stanley is seeking information on the resources being made available for CHI at Crumlin and the number of tests being offered at CHI at Crumlin.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) Response:

The Department of Clinical Genetics (DCG) laboratory offers a genetic testing service for the majority of hospitals in the Republic of Ireland. The laboratory was recently successful in obtaining ISO 15189 accreditation to the new 2022 standards. An up to date list of current tests and turnaround times can be found on the Lab App located at: olchlab.return2sender.ie/Account/Login.aspx. In 2023, the DCG laboratory processed ~12,000 samples for a wide range of clinical referrals. The laboratory has seen an increase in sample numbers year on year likely due to the increasing understanding in the role genetics plays in disease. The laboratory is staffed with highly educated and trained Clinical Scientists and Genetics Technologists, the current staff allocation is 54WTEs however due to the HSE recruitment embargo the actual staff numbers are 45WTEs.

In the last 12 months the following additional resources have been provided to the DCG laboratory from HSE sources:

- Funding to replace the existing microarray service – the new platform will allow for higher resolution analysis providing a higher diagnostic yield for patients. *(total funding 520K from HSE)*
- Funding to upgrade the laboratory patient databases - reducing the reliance on old legacy systems *(in the order of 70K as purchased by IT)*
- Funding to upgrade Quality Management System software (Q-pulse). *(this was a hospital wide project roughly costing 70K)*
- Approval to purchase additional screens for staff work spaces to be equipped with double screens.



As with other areas of the health service, the DCG laboratory has been significantly impacted by the HSE recruitment embargo. There are currently 9WTEs positions vacant in the laboratory. The vacant positions will have a negative impact on the services provided by the laboratory, such as increasing turnaround times, inability to progress service improvement projects and staff morale. Laboratory management are actively monitoring the risk associated with the HSE recruitment embargo.

Yours sincerely

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