

Duncan Smith TD
Labour Party
Leinster House
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07/08/2024

PQ 33322/24: To ask the Minister for Health his plans to increase the number of medical oncologists; how many are currently in place; how many vacancies there are; what the annual training capacity is; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Duncan Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

As of 31st July 2024 there are 72 Medical Oncology consultant posts approved by the HSE^[1]. This represents a 67% increase in the number of Consultant posts approved since 2019^[2]. Of the 72 Medical Oncology consultant posts approved there are 66 posts filled, 5 are vacant and a further 1 post vacant with a future start date. The requirement for additional consultant medical oncologists was detailed in the Report on the Implementation of the 2006 Cancer Strategy ([link here](#)). As per recommendations from the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 ([link here](#)), the NCCP Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy Model of Care (available [here](#)) is expected to inform the strategy to achieve the Consultant Medical Oncologist's requirements for Ireland.

There is also an on-going medical workforce project collaboration between the HSE National Doctors Training Planning and Trinity College Dublin which includes several medical specialties including medical oncology. The overarching aim of the project is to project the training places needed in the higher specialist training programmes, in order to reach the consultant demand by 2038. In line with Sláintecare the HSE is aiming to move towards consultant delivered care, reduce reliance on non-consultant hospital doctors and ensure sufficient service capacity across the Health Regions.

There are currently 33 postgraduate trainees enrolled in the Medical Oncology Higher Specialist Training programme^[3]. This represents a 43% increase in the total number of trainees on the Medical Oncology training programme in the last five years^[4].

Yours sincerely,



Patricia Heckmann
Assistant National Director
National Cancer Control Programme

[1] As per report provided by NDTP dated 06/08/24. The data was extracted from DIME (Doctors Integrated Management E-system) as at 31st July 2024. DIME is dependent on clinical sites inputting details on their consultant workforce and therefore there may be variances and gaps in the data supplied to that held within clinical sites. As DIME is a live system it must be noted that there can be variances in the figures published dependent on the run date of the report as entries can be made with a retrospective date.

[2] <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/met/consultantapplications/rep1/caac-annual-report-2019.pdf>

[3] As per report provided by NDTP dated 06/08/24

[4] <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/met/ed/rep/medical-workforce-report-2019-2020.pdf>