

CC/ML/MC

Email: pqmidwestacute@hse.ie

13th June 2024

Mr Michael Lowry TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 24201/24

To ask the Minister for Health to provide an update on the availability of radiology and MRI services in University Hospital Limerick; to provide clarity on the reason outpatients have been informed by UHL that outpatient MRI services have been paused indefinitely due to a large demand for inpatient MRI services; the action he is taking to rectify this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Michael Lowry

Dear Deputy Lowry,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

There are currently two MRI scanners in UHL, one owned by UL Hospitals Group and a second operated by Alliance Medical which serves patients in the hospital and also provides a GP service out-of-hours.

We face considerable challenges in the provision of diagnostic scans, including MRI, in University Hospital Limerick as demand for radiology tests now exceeds available capacity.

Priority at present is being given to inpatients and to oncology outpatients. Through the Alliance service mentioned above, for example, a certain number of MRI slots are available at the weekends for patients who have been discharged from UHL during the week to return at the weekend for their scan. Without this service, these patients would remain in hospital.

In relation to future developments, planning permission was secured in October 2023 for an extension to the Radiology Department at UHL. This includes a single-storey extension to the MRI Department for an additional MRI scanner, and an upper floor extension to the Radiology Department for consultant radiologist offices, on-call facilities, teaching space and changing-room facilities.

The extension project has two parts: enabling works, which are currently out to tender; and the main building phase, which is planned to go to tender shortly. We expect the project to be completed in Q1 2026.

Please note that in 2023, over 19,000 radiology scans (including MRIs) were carried out in the HSE Mid West under the GP Access to Community Diagnostics Scheme, reducing referrals to Emergency Departments, Acute

Medical Units and outpatient departments. This record activity for the scheme surpassed the 15,755 radiology scans completed in 2022.

I trust this clarifies the position, please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group