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11th October 2024

PQ No:38718/24

To ask the Minister for Health the current number and waiting times for each radiation oncology unit, in tabular form

Dear Deputy

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) collects limited summary data on Radiation Therapy.

In line with the NCCP National Radiotherapy KPI every patient referred for radiation therapy, is seen by their Radiation Oncologist and triaged in a timely manner meaning there are no current waiting lists to be seen and assessed.

The primary national radiation therapy Key Performance Indicator (KPI) focuses on start-date/access to treatment. This KPI aims for 90% of patients undergoing radical treatment for primary cancer to commence treatment within 15 working days of being deemed ready to treat by the radiation oncologist. The recommended target is 90% for operational compliance as approximately 10% of patients can be expected to have more complex needs that confound or delay treatment. This KPI data is reported monthly by the Cancer Intelligence unit at the NCCP. The most recently available data for the Public system is from August 2024 and is shown below, table 1:

Table 1: Number of patients completing Radical Treatment and percentage who commenced treatment within 15 working days of being deemed ready to treat, by centre and month, 12 months up to current month and YTD (Target 90%)

Table with 16 columns: Radiation Oncology, Metric, Sep '23, Oct '23, Nov '23, Dec '23, Jan '24, Feb '24, Mar '24, Apr '24, May '24, Jun '24, Jul '24, Aug '24, Total, YTD. Rows include SLRON All, Galway University Hospital, and Cork University Hospital.

Reasons for not meeting the KPI

Personal Choice – To allow for cases where a patient chooses to defer an appointment offer, and thereby be counted as outside of target by reason of personal choice rather than by any service capacity pressures,

**Operationally within target** – The KPI is considered as operationally within target if it is to within a 5% tolerance of the target compliance

**Tail > Met** - Where the number of patients outside target at >15 working days (tail) is bigger than the number of patients meeting the target (met), then the service is either working through a significant patient backlog or there is a patient backlog building.

Please note the following caveats when interpreting the data:

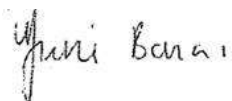
- Each patient is prioritised for commencement of their course of radiation therapy by their consultant radiation oncologist. Category 1 patients are prioritised and usually are seen as soon as possible. All patients receive treatment within clinically appropriate timeframes.
- The data collected is for radically treated patients only. The data does not include patients who are treated palliatively or patient who are treated for benign (non-cancerous) conditions.
- The data is collected retrospectively. The data is collected for a patient when that patient completes their course of radiation treatment.

### **Mitigations to improve performance**

The following mitigation measures are in place to address and improve the non-compliance with the KPI:

- An incentivised over-time service is utilised in each of the public RT departments.
- Public Radiotherapy centres out-source selected patients based on clinical indications to private radiotherapy facilities.
- Hypofractionation (reduced number of treatments in a course of radiation therapy) has been implemented when clinically appropriate in all radiotherapy departments as per national clinical guidelines.
- The equipment in SLRON is old. An equipment replacement programme is underway for SLRON as well as a major expansion of the facilities at the Beaumont Centre located on the site at Beaumont Hospital.
- New radiation oncology centres are opened in Cork and in Galway.
- Monthly KPI reports are shared by the NCCP with all Radiotherapy Centres for discussion at a monthly NCCP capacity meeting. KPIs and Waiting Lists and Times is a specific agenda item at this meeting that focuses on KPI performance, demand, capacity, mitigations, risks and issues. The “Radiation Oncology Capacity” meeting meets every 2 months...
- The NCCP’s Radiation Oncology Working Group (ROWG) meets approximately every month. “National Updates” is a specific agenda item at this meeting that focuses on KPI performance, demand, capacity, mitigations, risks and issues. Other issues such as new guidance and technologies are also part of this meeting agenda

Yours sincerely,



**Fiona Bonas**  
**Assistant National Director**

