



General Manager's Office
University Hospital Galway
Newcastle Road
Galway
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2nd October, 2024

REF: PQ 39382/24

RE: To ask the Minister for Health the staffing deficit at the radiation oncology centre for radiation therapy treatment in Saolta Centre Galway; the reason only three of the four linear accelerators are operating at full capacity; the reason only one of two CT scanners are operating to full capacity; his plans to ensure that all machines are operating at full capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Catherine Connolly

Dear Deputy Connolly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you directly in the context of the request for information referenced above.

There is currently a staffing deficit of approximately 25% with regard to Radiation Therapists in the Radiation Oncology centre at GUH. There are two open recruitment campaigns ongoing for Clinical Specialist Radiation Therapists and Radiation Therapists to try to address this. However with a national shortage of Radiation Therapists, this is proving difficult.

With regard to the staffing on the Linear Accelerators (Linac) within the department, there are three machines working at full capacity. Two of these currently have scheduled overtime rostered on them. A fourth Linac does not work at full capacity due to both mandatory servicing and quality assurance (QA) of the linear accelerators and also staff shortages amongst Radiation Therapists.

Every week, one Linear Accelerator is serviced and undergoes Quality Assurance which takes it out of clinical service for two days. Also, twice per year, each machine is in mandatory service for three consecutive days which can impact clinical delivery. Even without the mandatory servicing and QA, staffing levels will only permit two staff working on the fourth machine which limits capacity of that machine's use.

On non-service days, we could use the fourth Linac more if/when our staffing levels improve. Mandatory servicing of the machines has been identified as capacity limiting factor and as such a business case for installation of a 5th linear accelerator is being made. This would enable us to meet required capacity which we project will increase and cancer incidence continues to rise and specialised treatments such as stereotactic radiotherapy become available in GUH.

We currently have two CT Scanners in the department with one working at full capacity. The second is used when the first is on service and used as well as for brachytherapy patients requiring planning CT scans. With increased staffing, we would be able to dedicate therapy staff to the second scanner and operate it fully.

As above, we continue to try and recruit to fill vacant Radiation Therapist positions.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Kane
General Manager
Galway University Hospitals