



Deputy Peadar Tóibín

10th September 2024

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Dublin 2

PQ 34404/24 - To ask the Minister for Health to provide a breakdown of the numbers and current waiting times to access each specialist pain clinic; the numbers who accessed each clinic for each of the past five years; and to provide a sample of the main categories of health conditions which required an assessment and further pain management on referral to each clinic where possible, in tabular form

Dear Deputy Tóibín

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.

Response:

The information you have requested is contained in the attached excel spreadsheet, which includes:

1. OPD Activity 2019-2024, data source HSE BIU
2. OPD waiting lists 2019-2024, data source NTPF
3. IPDC waiting list 2019-2024, data source NTPF

Chronic pain, in particular low back pain and neck pain, is the leading cause of disability in the working age population world-wide. It has huge personal and socioeconomic implications.

Type of pain syndromes

- The most common reason for referral to the pain clinic is musculoskeletal pain due to osteoarthritis with low back pain, neck pain, other joints (e.g. knee, hip, shoulder).
- A smaller group of patients will have nociplastic and visceral pain like fibromyalgia, migraine, chronic abdominal and pelvic pain.



- The above covers 90% of the referrals.
- A small percentage of patients have more complex and rare pain syndromes like trigeminal neuralgia, bladder pain syndrome, spasticity, etc. and these patients will often be seen in the local pain clinic and then referred on to a more specialised pain service.

All clinics in Ireland are led by a Consultant Pain Specialist. All of these doctors are on the Specialist Register for Anaesthesiology with the Medical Council. In the near future, a new register will be established with the Medical Council for Pain Medicine.

These doctors have completed anaesthesiology training (6 years) and an additional 2-year pain fellowship programme with a fellowship exit exam (FFPMCAI).

A Multi-disciplinary team to deliver the various treatment strategies – these are in addition to the doctors in the service and include administration, nursing, physiotherapy, psychology, and may also include pharmacy, social work, occupational therapy.

Over the past 2 years as part of the Waiting List action plan (WALP) services have been assisted with the use of once off funding to support addressing waiting list access for pain conditions, which has focused on patients who have been waiting for the longest period of time, however it should be noted that demand for many services including pain has grown significantly over the past 5 years which has resulted in growth in overall numbers of patients waiting, but for shorter periods of time.

I trust this addresses your query.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Íde O'Shaughnessy', written over a horizontal line.

Íde O'Shaughnessy,
Access & Integration,
HSE