



Príomhfheidhmeannach ag gníomhú di Grúpa
An Grúpa Ollscoile um Chúram Sláinte Saolta

Ospidéal Ollscoile na Gaillimhe
Bóthar an Chaisleáin Nua
Gaillimh H91 YR71 Éire
Fón: 091 893800
www.saolta.ie | @saoltagroup

Chief Executive Officer
Saolta University Health Care Group

University Hospital Galway
Newcastle Rd.
Galway H91 YR71 Ireland
Tel: 091 893800
www.saolta.ie | @saoltagroup



24th Sept., 2024.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív,
Leinster House,
Kildare St.,
Dublin 2.

PQ 35926/24:- To ask the Minister for Health if there is an adequate provision for dialysis in the Saolta region of hospitals; if not, the steps that could be taken immediately to meet demand and to provide as many persons as appropriate with the option of home dialysis or outpatient dialysis, particularly in view of the scattered nature of settlement in the region and the distance many people live from hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Ó Cuív,

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. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

The National Renal Office is responsible for planning, co-ordinating and managing the strategic development of Renal Services across the country. The NRO immediate priorities are:

- Expansion of renal transplantation activity
- Expansion of dialysis capacity to accommodate growth in demand
- Provision of services closer to patient's homes
- Improvement in patient centred care

Renal service expansion and development is based on clinical need, in line with priorities identified by the National Renal Office and will encompass the key considerations of capacity, configuration and governance. This included the implementation of a National Renal Strategy supported by operational plans and other Renal Health Intelligence.

- **In centre Haemodialysis (HD) capacity in the Saolta University Health Care Region**

Haemodialysis services in the Saolta Hospital Group (and as elsewhere) remain at maximum capacity. All HD units are currently full at 100% capacity (Merlin Park University Hospital (MPUH), Mayo University Hospital (MUH), Sligo University Hospital (SUH) and Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH)). We acknowledge that it is not ideal that the system is at 100% occupancy.

The current position is outlined below in relation to each of our hospital sites.



GUH:

There is a significant demand on the Dialysis service in Merlin Park University Hospital which is currently providing dialysis to approximately 90 patients per week. There has been a significant increase in demand on the dialysis service over the past 4 years with patient numbers increasing from 63 in 2020 to 92 patients in September 2024. Capacity is further being expanded to facilitate an additional 2 patients from Sunday 22nd Sept. The service will then have an expanded capacity of 94 patients.

In order to meet the increasing demand, two additional isolation rooms have been added to the service and will become operational in November, 2024. While these rooms were being commissioned, a contingency plan was put in place. This involved placing 2 surge dialysis treatment chairs onto the unit.

We now plan to retain these treatment chairs which will allow 24 additional dialysis sessions a week, accommodating approx. 8 additional patients. We will require 2.5 additional staff for which a submission has been made to facilitate these sessions (treatment chairs). Retaining these chairs will allow us to facilitate 102 patients (94 +8).

The Acute unit has also been under significant pressure due to an increase in demand for acute dialysis since 2020. In order to expand the service to meet demand, an additional nurse was allocated to support out of unit dialysis e.g. inpatient ward, 7 days/week. Due to a recent surge in demand for acute dialysis the acute unit experienced unprecedented demand and was operating above capacity. The demand on the dialysis service is expected to rise year on year with the last 4 years as an indicator of same. There are currently a number of patients who are attending the Renal OPD who will require commencement on dialysis in the near future. This will place further demand for dialysis slots on the existing service.

The Home Therapies unit currently facilitates 34 patients for Renal Home Therapies, the development of this service would also be required to support capacity in the long term.

The Wellstone Clinic, Galway, is a private facility and is utilized by GUH to outsource the care and treatment of patients which provides additional capacity to support service needs.

MUH:

The Castlebar Unit is at full capacity at present. The renal service in Mayo currently provides a service across six days a week (Mon-Sat). There are three shifts running Mon/Wed/Fri and two shifts Tues/Thurs/Sat with patients accessing dialysis in one or two service slots (Tues, Thurs and Sat) or the three slot days (Mon, Wed and Fri).

This current service model allows 75 individuals to receive care each week. There are 15 patient spaces per dialysis session.

As demand for dialysis services grow the renal service in Mayo has adapted to accommodate increased service need.



The hospital plans to manage the service over the next 3 years to ensure the unit can continue to provide high quality renal dialysis care to the population who require it.

SUH:

SUH has currently 63 maintenance HD patients. There are 11 stations in the main unit with 3 additional temporary stations running off portable RO filters for the past 2 years on level 5. This was done to cope with a surge in capacity while waiting for an additional 4 stations to be added adjacent to the main unit.

The interim solution in the main unit is underway. A prefab to house staff room etc. has been installed. The space vacated by decanting these areas is to be renovated/amalgamated to give space for 4 new stations, allowing us to close the temporary unit on level 5.

Some patients are still on 2x weekly, allowing for two additional patients to be dialysed. Current utilized slots are as follows:

- 11 stations doing 2 shifts 6 days a week = 44
- 11 stations doing 3rd shift MWF = 11
- 3 stations doing 2 shifts MWF = 6

An Options Appraisal is currently being completed in relation to proposed new build/extension to existing Hospital to accommodate 25 bay Renal Dialysis Unit, including Outpatient services, together with associated staffing facilities. This Appraisal is expected to be completed by early Qtr.4, 2024. Once finalised it will form the basis for a full capital submission which, once approved, will facilitate the projects inclusion on the HSE's Capital Plan. The project will then proceed through the stages of the Capital Works Management Framework, subject to funding.

LUH:

Currently there are 62 patients accessing the Renal Dialysis Unit in LUH. One patient has been outsourced to Altnagelvin and a second patient who is due to start Home Dialysis will go to Omagh once ready.

Renal Home Therapy (RHT) is being established in Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH). At present, patients that require a renal replacement therapy in Donegal are offered the option of Peritoneal Dialysis (PD). This is performed by the patient in their own home.

There are pathways, both planned and unplanned, established for patients for Peritoneal Dialysis.

Patients deemed suitable for PD are referred to Merlin Park University Hospital, Galway, for PD catheter assessment. When the patient is deemed competent, PD training is provided in Merlin Park, Home Dialysis Unit. It is envisaged that this training will be provided in LUH by the end of the year. Following training the patient care and follow up will take place in Letterkenny.



Currently, LUH has one patient trained and availing of the Home PD self-caring service at home. LUH could have potentially three patients by the end of October.

- **Peritoneal Dialysis/Renal Home Therapy**

There are 35 peritoneal dialysis patients and 7 patients on Home Haemodialysis across the West/North West region. The majority of these are from Galway. These numbers are expanding but this takes time and is led by Galway University Hospitals (GUH).

The GUH Home Therapies lead has been engaging with the other units, especially the MUH site where the service will be operational from Qtr 4. SUH and LUH are in early development stage.

Saolta University Health Care Group has a Home Therapies Strategy with the aim of driving this forward.

I hope this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Cosgrove,
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Saolta University Health Care Group.