



Deputy Mairéad Farrell
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

25th September 2024

PQ 36462/24, 36463/24, 36465/24, 36466/24:

- ***To ask the Minister for Health his plans to solve the trolley crisis while ignoring osteoporosis which is one of the most frequent reasons for admission to public hospitals and one of the highest bed occupancy requirements. – Deputy Mairéad Farrell***
- ***To ask the Minister for Health the reason osteoporosis and arthritis patients have to wait years for a physiotherapy or outpatient appointments when other diseases have access within weeks or months. – Deputy Mairéad Farrell***
- ***To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that many severe osteoporosis patients are unable to use a daily injection or take oral therapy correctly. – Deputy Mairéad Farrell***
- ***To ask the Minister for Health the reason he is not supporting best practice and standards for DEXA in Ireland and osteoporosis care. – Deputy Mairéad Farrell***

Dear Deputy Farrell,

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

Response:

The role of the Emergency Department (ED) is to ensure that acutely unwell patients receive the necessary emergency care they require. All patients attending ED are triaged into one of five categories of urgency, in relation to the need for emergency intervention. Approximately 25% of attendances are then referred for inpatient admission.

“Osteoporosis is characterised by reductions in bone mineral density and quality, leading to disruption of the normal bone architecture, increased bone fragility and a greater propensity to fracture” Irish Fracture Liaison Service Database Annual Report 2023. Osteoporosis is a very common disease estimated to affect one in three women and one in five men in their lifetimes.

The diagnosis and treatment of Osteoporosis largely takes place within Primary Care allowing GPs to diagnose and provide the treatment management for Osteopenia. The GP Access to Community Diagnostics Scheme is an integral component of the Enhanced Community Care programme, which provides direct access to diagnostic imaging including DXA scanning. The scheme builds on pathways already in place for GP direct access.

Falls assessments along with Osteoporosis drug treatment is essential for fracture risk reduction. There are no figures available to identify how many patients are not able to take current treatments due to difficulties with self-injection ability or ability to swallow tablets or due to medical contraindication.



Onward referral where appropriate in the event of suspected or confirmed fracture is via the Fracture Liaison Service (FLS), Consultant Rheumatologist, Consultant Orthopaedic surgeon, Consultant Endocrinologist from the patients GP for continual assessment, treatment and monitoring. In 2022 3,195 patients were recorded on the FLS database as non-hip fragility fractures, 1,186 were admitted to the hospital, Irish Fracture Liaison Service Database Annual Report 2023.

<https://www.rcsi.com/surgery/-/media/feature/media/download-document/surgery/practice/ncp/trauma-and-orthopaedic/publications/fls-db-annual-report-2023.pdf>

The Irish DXA Society Standards under the authority of HIQA and the Environmental Protection Agency states: "DXA standards are a guide to best practice backed up by international and national evidence-based positions. The acceptable standards are based on research, evidence and the consensus of experts. Our standards have been adopted from the International Society for Clinical Densitometry Best Practice Paper and adapted to meet Irish national requirements and regulations."

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ca36aaa01232c9c287211d4/t/61f30756f01d4f7315bf8376/1643317079165/Irish+DXA+standards+.pdf>

I trust this is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Emma Benton'.

Emma Benton
General Manager
Access & Integration