

23.07.04

9 Deputy C.S. Alves of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding MRI scans (OQ.139/2023)

Will the Minister advise what the current waiting time is for M.R.I. (magnetic resonance imaging) scans and explain how patients are prioritised on this waiting list?

Deputy K. Wilson (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The most available current data that we have is of 17th May 2023 and shows the average waiting time for an M.R.I. scan for patients seen in the previous 3 calendar months, which is February, March and April. What I can say is that there are 158 patients who were triaged as urgent, the waiting time average is at 17 days; 190 patients were triaged as soon, with an average wait of 48 days; and 54 patients were triaged as routine, with an average wait of 169 days.

3.9.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Minister go into a bit more detail as to what constitutes urgent? I have heard of a constituent who has been bed-ridden and was given a waiting time of 5 months. Even going privately, was told that it would take 2 months. They ended up getting on a plane and going to Guernsey and having it done in 2 days. I would appreciate it if the Minister could go into a bit more detail as to what constitutes urgent.

Deputy K. Wilson:

This a clinical assessment and the treating clinician will determine that. If we take, as a general rule, that we would aim to see people within a 2-week period if they were urgent and within 6 weeks if it was a soon appointment. We do not have any defined standard for routine. I am concerned to hear that there is a member of the public who has experienced that particular scenario. I am happy to take the particular circumstances of that particular individual forward and address those outside of the Chamber.

3.9.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given the vital importance of early diagnosis, particularly of certain cancers, can the Minister assure the public that the waiting time for M.R.I., which is so important in diagnosis and treatment of many types of cancers, is on that priority waiting list? What does the Minister feel is the maximum time that people are waiting for those scans?

Deputy K. Wilson:

I want to repeat what I have just said, we are working to reduce the waiting times for all of our services across the piece. There is a relentless focus on reducing waiting times. I accept that, in particular, cancer care is a priority for us. Yes, I give that undertaking to commit to improving our response on that. One of the things that we must not lose sight of is that clearly there is a clinical perspective in terms of decision-making. While we will set a standard, it may well be that if a clinician considers that scan to be brought forward then we would do that as a matter of course.

[11:00]

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sir, before my supplementary, I did ask about waiting times for a specific condition, such as that. I wonder if there is a waiting time the Minister could say before I use up my supplementary, because I would like to use that on something else.

Deputy K. Wilson:

The waiting times, as I have said, we have a system in place to manage the waiting time for referral. The waiting time, in terms of treatment, we do not have a standard from referral to treatment times, which is something that I am looking to introduce.

3.9.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister, is one of the causes of, perhaps, longer waiting times the difficulty in staffing M.R.I. scanners - they are a very specialist job - and the lack of specific strategies which may also influence waiting times?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes, any variation in such a specialist area of practice will have an impact on waiting times. We do keep our eye on this and we are actively recruiting to make sure that we have a sustainable service.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

I would like to thank the Minister for her answer and I will follow up.