

3.6 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding breast screening for women aged over 70:

Would the Minister advise whether senior citizens aged over 70 have to pay for breast screening, unlike younger women, and if so, will he undertake to address this anomaly and provide this service free of charge to everyone?

Senator S. Syvret (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The advice I received from the Medical Officer of Health on this is that breast screening for women of that age is of limited diagnostic and clinical value. It is therefore generally reckoned and decided that more appropriate use of the resource of screening is to focus on younger women.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

That is not my understanding of the situation, Sir. I have been contacted by many senior citizens who are worried about this. Ladies above the age of 70 are, by their very nature, retired, and are the least likely able to afford to pay for this service. Will the Minister correct this anomaly?

Senator S. Syvret:

Certainly my view is that the range of services - and there are a few - that people have to pay for at present, in respect to their secondary health care, should be free. That would be one of the objectives I would expect to see achieved as a result of the New Directions strategy. We do need, of course, to have adequate resources for health and social care, but I believe we need to be more focused on raising any additional monies required through some kind of social insurance scheme. I would, personally, prefer to see all of these diagnostic procedures and, indeed, other charges of secondary care, eliminated.