

2015.09.08

4.10 Deputy J.A. Hilton of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the current waiting time for the dermatology department:

Can the Minister advise what the current waiting time is for the Dermatology Department and detail what efforts, if any, are being made to recruit a new consultant in the department given that the current consultant has given one year`s notice and is due to retire in March 2016?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I thank the Deputy for her question. Patient referral letters are all reviewed and prioritised according to clinical urgency and they are allocated as such. Urgent patients are normally seen within a maximum of 3 weeks but frequently within a shorter timeframe. These are predominantly patients with high suspicion of skin cancer and other malignant melanomas. Patients that are not urgent but still need to be reviewed relatively soon are seen within 6 to 8 weeks. These, for example, are patients with severe inflammatory conditions. The remaining routine patients are seen within 12 to 20 weeks. With regard to the recruitment of the consultant dermatologist, before I answer that question, I think it is probably appropriate, as the Deputy has asked me about his replacement, to acknowledge the splendid work that that consultant has done and to thank him publicly for the service that he has provided the Island. The process of appointing the consultant is underway, the advert is out as we speak, and we have had some interest in the post and I hope that we will be able to make an appointment fairly soon. The process of whether we should replace the consultant or not has undergone a 'Lean' assessment and I am keen, with my officers, to pursue whether it is appropriate in line with the Primary Care Strategy for more things to be undertaken as part of primary care.

[10:45]

But this is ongoing work but the gist of the question from the Deputy is: what is the process of the replacement of the consultant? It is in hand and an advert is out as we speak.

4.10.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I thank the Minister for his answer. One of the reasons I asked this question is because in previous Scrutiny hearings when we have been discussing waiting lists, dermatology was the one speciality that only had one consultant operating in the department. So I wanted to ask the Minister whether any consideration is being given to employing more than one consultant in an attempt to get that waiting list down.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

As I alluded in my opening answer, I am satisfied that we only need one consultant but what I am committed to is that we provide more support within the primary care setup and that is what we are looking at so that only the more serious cases come to the hospital.

4.10.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Could the Minister just explain where the budget is going to come from to do that with primary care?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

We just have to look at the P.82/2012 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the investment that we intend to put into providing services within the community and keeping people out of hospital. Those are the sorts of things that we need to do. Failure to do that - failure to do that - will result in a hospital much bigger than we currently have.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That ends this period of questions with notice. In accordance with a decision taken earlier by the Assembly the time is now for the Chief Minister who will make his statement. Chief Minister.