

Patient Treatment Register Launched – New System Replaces Waiting lists

Friday, 9th September 2005: The National Treatment Purchase Fund (“NTPF”) today launched a Patient Treatment Register (“PTR”), the new national database of patients waiting for hospital treatment. The Register provides for the first time information linked to actual patients, waiting times, and detailed hospital information which has been validated.

The Patient Treatment Register provides for the first time:

- An accessible website link for patients, with detailed information on the top surgical procedures and waiting times for each;
- The ability for the NTPF to contact patients directly. Patients receive PTR cards from the NTPF so that they have the information to opt for treatment under the Fund. Patients are already receiving cards.
- A GP website link on waiting times for all procedures in individual hospitals in order to assist the referral process;
- A separate link for each hospital with detailed information on procedures and patient status;
- A complete and accurate picture of hospital waiting lists in Ireland, including waiting times and numbers, with consistent national operating guidelines and definitions, and actual status of lists, reflecting the continuous movement of patients on and off hospital lists.

The Patient Treatment Register is being phased in nationally, with Phase 1 now complete and live. Phase 1 includes data from the following hospitals;

- The Mater Misericordiae Hospital
- Tallaght Hospital
- Beaumont Hospital
- St. James's Hospital
- St. Vincent's University Hospital
- Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown
- St John's Hospital, Limerick

Under the prior waiting list system, these hospitals accounted for approximately 40% of the total number of patients waiting nationally.

The new Patient Treatment Register sets out detailed waiting lists statistics using uniform definitions. The Register highlights the number of patients actively waiting for treatment; those who, for whatever reason, are not now available for their procedure; those who are suspended; and those who have a scheduled date for treatment. This detailed information gives an up-to-date, accurate reflection of the position in each public hospital in Phase 1, which has not been available to date.

In the data collected to date for Phase 1 hospitals on the Register, the following are the overall statistical results;

- Waiting times are significantly reduced in the hospitals on the Register, and the total numbers of patients waiting have also been reduced.
- For the most common surgical procedures (17 out of 20), patients are waiting 2 to 4 months for their operation.
- The number of patients waiting in the 6 to 12 month waiting time band has been halved, while those waiting over 12 months are down two thirds.
- In total there are 4,944 actively waiting for a surgical procedure (including 628 day cases not previously recorded) in the hospitals, compared to 9,106 reported under the old system for the same hospitals in January 2004.

The **Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, T.D.**, welcomed the Register: “The Patient Treatment Register is a new way of putting patients first in the way we provide elective treatments in our hospitals. People will have better information and choice about their treatment. With their GPs, they will have a stronger role in decisions about their own treatment. The NTPF will be proactive in contacting patients to offer treatment options. We will also now be able to measure progress in getting waiting times down, which is the aim of government policy and what patients want. This a practical example of a patient-centred service.’

The **Chairperson of The National Treatment Purchase Fund, Ms. Maureen P Lynott**, said; “In May 2004 the National Treatment Purchase Fund was given responsibility for the collation and management of the national waiting lists for hospital treatment. We now have a new Register which is accessible, informative, accurate, standardized and most of all empowers patients.”

“The system is being rolled out nationally with hospitals around the country progressively being brought on to the Register online. The PTR Report will be published twice annually.”

Mr. Pat O'Byrne, Chief Executive, The National Treatment Purchase Fund, said: "The development of the Patient Treatment Register has been achieved in close collaboration with hospitals and required significant technical and operational development. It is a significant step forward which will benefit patients.

"The new Patient Treatment Register has patients' details such as, name, address, the procedure they are waiting for and date placed on the waiting list. The NTPF is now able to contact patients directly to offer them treatment. With the issuing of the patient treatment register cards, patients will be empowered to play a role, with their doctor, in getting treatment faster."

The National Treatment Purchase Fund continues to arrange surgical treatment for public patients on public hospital waiting lists and its target for 2005 is to arrange treatment for over 16,000 patients. To date, over 35,000 patients have been treated under the Fund since July 2002. There is no need for patients to wait over three months for their surgical procedure. Patients can contact the NTPF on Lo-Call 1890 720820 to check if they are eligible for treatment under the Fund.

ENDS

Issued on behalf of the National Treatment Purchase Fund by Gibney Communications.

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Background note to editors:

WEBSITE www.ntpf.ie or www.ptr.ie

The new user friendly website link enables patients to check waiting times for the top 20 procedures in each of the hospitals in Phase 1. They will be able to access the patient link and by scrolling over the human body get definitions for each procedure and then access the waiting time in a particular hospital for that procedure.

GP's can access information through the GP link, on waiting times for every surgical procedure in each hospital covered in Phase 1. In 2006, they will be able to see the waiting times for hospitals and refer their patient to the hospital with the shortest waiting time for that procedure. This is the first online system on waiting times nationally, and will facilitate referral decisions by GP's and patients. Once a public patient has been put on a public in-patient or day

case waiting list by their hospital consultant, their name will be placed on the Patient Treatment Register by that hospital.

Each hospital also has a separate log-in facility, which is password protected, so that they can access information on each procedure in their hospital. This will give the hospital the patient status on their own waiting list and this can be used for planning and delivery of patient treatment.

For the first time patients, GP's and hospitals have updated information at their hands which can help get patients treated faster. GP's and patients will be able to use the Patient Treatment Register and the information on the average waiting times for surgery at a particular hospital for a particular procedure, when making their decision on referral.

Patient confidentiality is totally protected in that no names appear on the website.

Patient Treatment Register Card:

Once the patient is referred for treatment by the consultant, they will be placed on the Patient Treatment Register by their hospital. After three months, patients on the Patient Treatment Register still awaiting a surgical procedure will receive a personal advice letter and information card from the NTPF. The first letters have already been sent out to patients. This information will allow patients to choose if they wish to have their treatment sooner in another hospital or continue to wait in their original hospital. In some specialised cases, treatment may be best provided in a patient's own hospital. The patient needs to contact the NTPF lo-call line following the receipt of their letter to arrange their treatment. The Patient Treatment Register will empower patients with more choice and more information and the ability of the NTPF to contact patients on the Register will provide a continuous quality assurance mechanism of the information on the Register.