

7,500 OUT-PATIENT APPOINTMENTS THROUGH NATIONAL TREATMENT PURCHASE FUND

OUT PATIENT PROGRAMME EXPANDS IN 2006

LISTS REDUCED BY 11,500 IN TOTAL

In 2006 the National Treatment Purchase Fund significantly expanded its Out-Patient Programme to remove a total of 11,480 patients from out-patient waiting lists around the country.

In order to achieve this it contacted almost 18,000 patients, offered first time appointments to 7,480 of these and removed a further 4,000 patients still featuring on waiting lists but who no longer required an appointment. Some patients had been waiting up to five years on waiting lists to see their consultant for the first time.

"There is no doubt that there are issues around the country with some patients waiting a long time to see a consultant in the first instance. This slows up the entire treatment process and could see patients losing out. We arranged first time appointments for 60% more patients than we did in 2005 and expect to expand further this year. It is only once patients have had this appointment and progress within the system that they can access the treatment that many of them require", said National Treatment Purchase Fund Chief Executive, Pat O'Byrne.

The Out-Patient programme has been developed on a pilot basis with hospitals around the country. Last year 25 public hospitals participated, up from 18 in 2005, while there were 17 treating hospitals (up from 13) and medical specialties were included for the first time.

Main statistics from the Out-Patient programme were:

- 17,795 patients contacted
- 7,480 accepted offer of NTPF out-patient appointment
- Further 4,000 (23%) removed from waiting lists as not requiring appointment
- 1,972 declined offer and chose to remain on current waiting list
- 4,343 did not respond and are being re-contacted by hospitals

Of the 7,480 patients who were offered appointments:

- 10% did not attend on two occasions and were removed from the lists
- 42% required surgery
- 32% did not require surgery and were discharged to their GP for care
- 16% required further investigation or review

The programme focused on areas of greatest need as defined by the participating hospitals and has had considerable impact on several waiting

lists including reducing the waiting times for Orthopaedics in Cork University Hospital from 5 years to 18 months, Endocrinology in the Mater from 4 years to 2 months, and ENT in Tallaght from 2 years to 12 months.

The main specialties featured in the programme were ENT (30%), orthopaedic surgery (22%), urology (15%) and general surgery (13%).

"Since 2005 we have developed strong links with hospitals around the country and are beginning to make an impact in providing a service to those waiting for out-patient appointments. We will expand the scheme further in 2007 and expect to have still more hospitals taking part. It is interesting to note the pattern of approximately 25% of people still registered as waiting on lists seem to no longer require appointments. This validation exercise is extremely important as we target those who are in most need of care", said Pat O'Byrne.

In 2007 the NTPF plans to arrange appointments for almost 10,000 patients – an increase of over 30%.

To date the NTPF has arranged treatment for more than 65,000 patients. The bulk of its work is with public patients requiring surgery who have been waiting more than three months for their operation. Patients can contact the NTPF directly on 1890 720 820 to discuss their treatment options.

Ends

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Table I – Participating Hospitals and Specialties

Referring Hospital	Specialties	No.Referred	Treating Hospital
AMNCH	ENT Adults and Paeds	335	AMNCH and Bons Glasnevin
Beaumont	Orthopaedics	81	Mater Private
Cappagh	Orthopaedics	51	Mater Private
Connolly Hospital	Plastics	30	Blackrock Clinic
Cork University Hospital.	Plastics,Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic and Urology	1042	Barringtons, Bons Tralee, Bons Cork, Shanakiel
Kerry General	General Surgery ,ENT, Gynaecology, Orthopaedics	167	Bons Tralee, Bons Cork, Barringtons.
Letterkenny	General Surgery, ENT	507	NWIH
Mater Public	Endocrinology,Ophthalmology,E NT.	713	Mater Private, Hampton
Midlands	Orthopaedics	62	Galway Clinic
Mid-West :-Limerick Regional/ Croom	Orthopaedics and Urology	109	Barringtons and Bons Cork
NorthEast :- (Our Lady'sDrogheda/ Monaghan General)	Urology and ENT	212	St Francis, Bons Glasnevin
RVEEH (Eye and Ear)	Ophthalmology	118	Blackrock
South East :- Waterford Regional	Orthopaedics,ENT, Ophthalmology,General Surgery	1067	Mater Private, Bons Cork, Aut Even
Sligo	Orthopeadic, ENT, General Surgery.	154	Galway Clinic and Garden Hill
St. James	Rheumatology	14	St. James Private
St. Johns	General Surgery	83	Barringtons
St. Vincents	Plastics,Orthopaedics,ENT	291	Blackrock, St. Francis
Temple St	ENT	150	Temple,St,St.Francis
Western Area (UCHG, Mayo, Roscommon, Mayo, Merlin Park)	Rheumatology, ENT, Plastics, Ophthalmology,General Surgery, Orthopaedics, Urology	2294	Bons Galway,Galway Clinic
Referring Hospitals - 25	Specialties - 9	7480	Treating Hospitals - 17