

HSE Response to Memory Clinic Press Query

Availability of Memory Clinics Nationally

Memory clinics are one model through which people with potential cognitive impairment can access assessment and diagnostic services. Assessment and diagnostic services are also accessible through Geriatric/Age Related Care Services, Neurology Services and Psychiatry of Later Life services. Neurology services would where available typically see patients under 65.

Memory clinics are a relatively recent evolution in the clinical diagnosis and support for people with dementia, their function is still being evaluated in many international contexts and are part of a suite of clinical services that people who report problems with cognition or memory issues are referred to which include neurology services, geriatric medicine and psychiatry of later life.

Services and Supports Available Nationally

There are a number of dementia specific supports and services available for individuals across Ireland. As part of the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy there is a commitment to develop care pathways and these are in train.

Function of Memory Clinics

Memory clinics provide assessment and diagnostic services where there is concern around cognitive impairment. Memory clinics may also provide one or more of the following services; post-diagnostic support, referral to appropriate services, information and advice.

Development of Dementia Pathways

Work is currently ongoing to define and develop referral pathways for people with dementia, in both the community and acute sector. As part of the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy, the PREPARED project developed diagnostic and referral pathways for GPs, which are available on dementiaphways.ie. In addition, dementia pathways have been developed in three acute hospital pilot sites as part of a Genio/Atlantic Philanthropies funded project. Learning from these pilot sites will be rolled out to all acute hospitals as part of the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy. A post-diagnostic care pathway project is commencing in June 2017. A national steering group has been established and a project plan developed.

Timely Diagnosis and Intervention

In order to progress the priority action area of timely diagnosis and management identified in the National Dementia Strategy, the following actions have been implemented;

- The publication of a Dementia Reference Guide (DRG) in 2014 providing GPs with an overview of current guidelines and clinical evidence in the management of dementia in general practice, including the key areas around dementia diagnosis, disclosure, management and support of patients and their families. This guide is being updated this year.
- The development, test and launch of a dementia GP practice register, finder and audit tools in conjunction with ICGP/IPCRN
- A post-diagnostic care pathway project is commencing in June 2017. A national steering group has been established and a project plan developed.
- [Dementiaphways.ie](http://dementiaphways.ie) website launched in May 2016 containing resources and materials for primary care health care professionals (GP's, practice teams, AHPs)
- GP dementia education workshops currently being delivered to GP practices by GP facilitators nationally.

- Primary care team dementia education workshops developed and roll-out planned to commence.
- Completion of a HSE/ASI mapping project which identified dementia-specific community supports and services available in Ireland. Information will populate a service finder which will be available on understandtogether.ie at the end of June 2017.
- A project plan is currently being developed for a diagnostic pathway review project that will be led by the National Dementia Office.

Note: GPs are most often the first point of contact for someone worried about their cognition. They are instrumental in undertaking initial cognitive screening and referring to appropriate services.

Development of Memory Clinics

As part of the diagnostic pathway review project outlined in section 1.5 above, a review of all diagnostic services available in Ireland will be completed. This process will identify any gaps in the availability of diagnostic services and will support the development of standard diagnostic referral pathways nationally.

Information Not Currently Available

The HSE is currently unable to respond to the following queries, as the information is not available:

- Where people with memory problems in the North West and Western regions are referred to for assessment and diagnosis e.g. to collate information on local Geriatric Medicine and POA services.
- Waiting lists and waiting times for specific memory clinics