

Joint Committee
on
Public Petitions

OPENING STATEMENT

By

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Introduction

Good afternoon Chairperson and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to meet with the Committee on Public Petitions to discuss Lil Reds Legacy Sepsis Awareness Campaign. I am joined by my colleagues:

Dr Orla Healy, National Clinical Director for Quality and Patient Safety, HSE.

Dr Michael O Dwyer, National Clinical Lead for the Sepsis Programme, HSE.

Dr Ciara Martin, National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead for Children and Young People.

In the first instance, on behalf of the HSE we would like to acknowledge the sad loss for the Hughes family of their son, Sean. We recognise the Hughes family's contribution in the intervening years to raise awareness of sepsis and the importance of early presentation to the acute setting if symptoms develop.

Before I begin and as the focus of this meeting is on public awareness campaigns, I will briefly outline the international evidence in relation to the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns, as well as the techniques used to reach the target audience. While there is limited evidence of best practice guidelines in relation to public awareness campaigns specifically focused on sepsis, the literature indicates that public awareness campaigns, in general, can lead to heightened information seeking around the time of the public awareness campaign, as indicated by peaks in internet search engine hits. Evidence on improved quality of care due to sepsis awareness campaigns and the impact on healthcare setting presentations is currently limited.

A number of studies noted the importance of undertaking public awareness campaigns in a targeted manner. This involves taking into account the difficulties in reaching certain audiences, the need to target those most at risk, exploring patient and family barriers to taking action and promoting changes in behaviour. It is important that we consider public awareness campaigns within national and international best practice for the management of Sepsis and in the context of the National Clinical Programme for Sepsis and its activities.

Today, I will present the following:

- Context and background of the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis
- Progress to date of the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis
- Key priorities for the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis for 2023

Context and background of the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis

The HSE Patient Safety Strategy (2019-2024) calls for the embedding of patient safety into everything that we do. Commitment 4 of the Strategy outlines 13 Common Causes of Harm. These are high impact patient safety risks and if tackled effectively, can result in improving safety in healthcare organisations. Reducing and Managing Sepsis addresses one of these Common Causes of Harm.

Sepsis is a time-dependent medical emergency where early recognition and prompt treatment is fundamental to increased survival rates and optimal outcome for survivors of sepsis and septic shock. It causes significant morbidity and mortality. There were 11,294 cases of sepsis documented in Ireland in 2020 with an average hospital sepsis-associated mortality rate of 20.1%, 26.5% of which were admitted to a critical care area (HSE, 2022). The average crude mortality rate of these patients admitted to a critical care area was 30.8%. Prevention, awareness of symptoms, and appropriate management are all crucial to improving outcomes in relation to sepsis.

In 2014 the HSE established the National Clinical Programme (NCP) for Sepsis and the first National Clinical Effectiveness Committee National Clinical Guideline for Sepsis was published. The focus of the Programme is sepsis awareness to promote early recognition and evidence-based management. The Programme aims to align its work with all relevant clinical programmes and national clinical guidelines as they relate to sepsis. Implementation of the NCEC National Clinical Guideline (September 2021) in Sepsis Management is advanced through audit, data collection, education and awareness raising. The national clinical guideline standardises management of sepsis in the acute hospital setting with use of a screening form to risk assess and the use of a care bundle, 'Sepsis 6 bundle', to optimise management of sepsis. Much work has been progressed on staff education to help to recognise the signs and symptoms of sepsis to allow early management, and the provision of the 'Sepsis 6 bundle'.

The HSE National Clinical Programme (NCP) for Sepsis has a 0.2 WTE Clinical Lead and a 1 WTE Programme Manager. Each of the seven hospital groups has an Assistant Director of Nursing (ADON) with operational responsibilities for delivering on the programme objectives. In February 2023, the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis became part of the HSE National Quality and Patient

Safety Directorate. There are currently ongoing discussions with the Department of Health to request further resources to enhance the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis to deliver fully on all aspects of the 2023 Operational Plan and to progress the development and implementation a 5-year Strategic Action Plan for Sepsis in Ireland.

A wide range of public awareness techniques have been utilised by the National Clinical Programme for Sepsis and local hospital teams, along with HSE Communications, over the last few years in relation to sepsis awareness for the public. For example:

- Planned communications using media relations to publicise sepsis risk, symptoms and what action people should take to respond to signs of this time sensitive medical emergency.
- HSE clinicians and patients have taken part in media interviews on radio and TV.
- Development of good quality information on the HSE.ie website about sepsis, which is the primary route that the public take to learn about health topics.
- Utilisation of social media to share promotional videos and messaging
- Production of a range of printed information materials for the public, which were made available through hospitals and health facilities including World Sepsis Day in September
- Display of the signs and symptoms of sepsis on the HSE National Ambulance Service fleet.
- Attendance at Public events on several occasions to share materials and for expert nursing teams to engage with and educate the public about Sepsis.

The HSE has not undertaken a specific paid radio or TV advertising campaign on Sepsis awareness.

Progress to date of the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis

- The National Sepsis Report for Ireland is published annually by the NCP for Sepsis. The report highlights the burden of sepsis in the acute setting, and its associated mortality rates. The first National Sepsis Report, 2011-2015 was published in December 2016. In September 2021 the 2019 National Sepsis Report was published, as the fifth in this suite of reports. The key finding in that report was a 26.5% reduction in age-adjusted mortality from sepsis/septic shock since 2011 in Ireland, providing reassurance with regards to our approach to sepsis. The overall reduction has been achieved by development and implementation of National Clinical Effectiveness Guidelines in adult, maternal and paediatric sepsis which has seen a standardised approach to the management of sepsis.

- The HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis, working with communications colleagues, has designed and developed a targeted national communication plan for sepsis awareness, including World Sepsis Day in September. This utilises a variety of methods i.e. posters, social media content, involving high-profile personalities, and the signs and symptoms of sepsis displayed on HSE National Ambulance Service fleet.
- The programme has hosted national conferences and study days in relation to sepsis awareness and training.
- This year there was a focus on pharmacists with an article on sepsis awareness and guidance for community pharmacists published in the community pharmacist's magazine in March. Guidance on ways in which hospital pharmacists can assist in the management of sepsis in the hospital setting was also included in the article and will be published in the equivalent 'Hospital Professional News' magazine.
- Development of educational programmes to support implementation of the National Sepsis Guideline and sepsis awareness incorporating a maternal sepsis scenario and paediatric animated videos to support parents to recognise sepsis in children and seek medical assistance/advice.
- E-learning modules on adult and paediatric sepsis are also available on HSE-land.
- Initiation of a project (GP Sepway) examining the integration of software to GP clinics to aid with sepsis awareness and management.

Annual retrospective audits against the National Clinical Guideline for Sepsis have been undertaken. No audits were undertaken during 2020 or 2021. During 2022, these audits were delayed due to redeployment and vacancies, but the audits are expected to be completed by May 2023. The 2023 audits will also commence in the coming weeks, with the audit methodology amended to allow more timely feedback and education opportunities.

Key priorities for the HSE National Clinical Programme for Sepsis for 2023

There are a number of key priorities for the programme for 2023:

- Address sepsis awareness in paediatric services, including promotion of paediatric e-learning module on HSE-Land;
- Address Women's Health sepsis awareness in pregnancy/post-pregnancy, including development of a public awareness campaign;

- Commence integration of software to GP clinics to aid with sepsis awareness and management as a pilot (for expansion on successful implementation);
- Introduce new metrics regarding sepsis governance, audit and education in acute hospitals;
- Conduct regular education sessions on signs and symptoms of sepsis, and the ‘Sepsis 6’ bundle, throughout the year, with audits to assess adherence to recommendations, this includes delivery of a webinar through Sláintecare which will be publicly available;
- Undertake stakeholder engagement to progress with a view to developing a 5 year Strategic Action Plan for Sepsis.
- Continue to provide National oversight and governance for Sepsis through the National Steering Committee and Working Group
 - Establish additional sub-groups to address key priority areas as required;
- Publish a sepsis outcome report for 2022;
- Co-host a two-day International Sepsis Summit in Dublin Castle, on the 19th and 20th September 2023 with the HSE National Quality and Patient Safety Directorate and the Department of Health;
- Conduct a qualitative survey on sepsis awareness and management in acute settings to ensure confidence in current management.
- Agree an action plan with the HSE Communications team to assess and evaluate current public awareness campaigns, and develop the most effective awareness campaign, taking into account the various platforms available and various different patient groups that need to be targeted;
- Continue to engage in public awareness in acute hospital settings and other identified opportunities such as the national ploughing championships etc.;
- Continue to update and maintain the NCP for Sepsis website to ensure information is relevant for healthcare professionals and the public;
- Progress the annual schedule of audit, including retrospective audits of paediatric and maternity services and prospective audit of adult in-hospital services;
- Continue to provide and encourage participation in the sepsis e-learning module for relevant healthcare professionals and this will be continually reviewed and updated as required;
- Undertake an assessment of training needs for national and regional teams, and provision of learning programmes, for example:

- Clinical Handover
- Human Factors
- Quality Improvement and Leadership training
- Change management and team ways of working
- Development and audit of metrics
- Integration across different healthcare settings
- Bespoke clinical education, as required

There is a need for a strategic and multidisciplinary approach to sepsis prevention, recognition and management. Many other countries, such as Australia, the UK and New Zealand, have recognised the need to develop a strategy to try to reduce the burden of sepsis on their economy. Having reviewed international best practice, the NQPSD and the NCP for Sepsis have identified the priority areas for inclusion in a 5-year Sepsis Strategic Action Plan for the HSE.

The 5-year Strategic Action Plan will build on and enhance the existing priorities and work of the programme.

This concludes my Opening Statement.

Thank you.