

Joint Committee on Health

OPENING STATEMENT

By

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Introduction

Good morning Chairperson and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to meet with the Joint Committee on Health to discuss awareness, prevention and services for the treatment of Sepsis. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the important contributions made by the Sepsis foundation, the End Sepsis Campaign and Lil' Red's Legacy Campaign, some of whom we have had contact with in the recent months.

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.

Today, I will present under the following headings:

- Increasing awareness of signs and symptoms, prevention and appropriate management of Sepsis through:
- Implementation of National Clinical Guidelines
- Education & Training of staff
- Audit, Quality Assurance & Governance
- Increasing public awareness of sepsis
- The 5 year strategic plan for the National Clinical Programme for Sepsis including its key priorities for 2024- 2026

The National Clinical Programme for 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 to promote the early recognition and evidence-based management of sepsis. Implementation of Sepsis Management for Adults (including maternity) National Clinical Guideline No. 26 is advanced through audit, education, quality improvement and raising awareness.

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 2021 National Sepsis Report was published in March 2023. The key finding in that report was a 22.3%% reduction in age-adjusted mortality from sepsis/septic shock since 2011 in Ireland. The overall reduction has been contributed to by development and implementation of Sepsis Management for Adults (including maternity) National Clinical Guideline (DOH, 2021), and the National Implementation Plan for implementing the International Guidelines for the Management of Septic Shock & Sepsis-Associated Organ Dysfunction in Children (HSE 2021) which provides a standardised approach to the recognition and management of sepsis in Ireland. The increased knowledge/ awareness and action of healthcare staff was the key driver behind these improvements in care.

Incidence of Sepsis in Ireland:

Accurate reporting of sepsis epidemiology has been complicated since 2020 with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the mortality rates of patients with sepsis from SARS CoV2 were higher than in patients with sepsis from other causes as we have outlined in our national report. Furthermore, as the pandemic has waned, there have been some poorly understood changes in sepsis epidemiology, notably the global increase in invasive Group A Strep infections which we have also noted in Ireland. Notwithstanding these recent changes mortality rates from sepsis have decreased since the inception of the programme in 2014 from 20.3% in 2020 to 19.0% in 2021 which is the published data available, it is expected that data will be published for 2022 before the year end.

Education & Training of Staff:

- In 2015, a nationwide education campaign was commenced for relevant HCWs in acute hospitals as part of the implementation of the National Clinical Guideline, and in 2016 we noted a 67% increase in documented cases of sepsis/septic shock.
- E-learning modules are available on HSEland, the online learning and development platform, for all relevant staff on adult, maternity & paediatric sepsis.
- Regular education sessions on signs and symptoms of sepsis, and the 'Sepsis 6' bundle, are conducted across all hospitals throughout the year, with audits to assess adherence to recommendations.
- In June 2023, the Programme conducted a qualitative survey on sepsis awareness and management in acute settings which was completed anonymously by a large volume of clinical staff. The survey analysis and results indicate that there is a high uptake of the eLearning training module on HSEland.
- The NCP supported the establishment of a pilot project to introduce sepsis recognition and treatment for GPs (GP Sepway Project). This project is progressing and is developing many resources for GPs across the country, for example:
 - A quick reference guide for GPs on the recognition and treatment of Sepsis in Adults. This will be ready for implementation in Quarter 2 2024.
 - Other education and training opportunities have been provided to GPs such as a recent webinar on recognising Sepsis with over 1600 GP attendees.
 - Supporting the integration of software to GP clinics to aid with sepsis awareness and management.
 - Education and awareness activities increase during Sepsis month

Sharing Expertise through Events:

- The 7th Sepsis Summit took place in Dublin Castle on 19 September. This year's summit had a global aspect, with international experts and family advocates amongst those presenting. 500 health and social care professionals and almost 100 members of the public attended the event.
- The summit heard from a range of speakers on the latest scientific research and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sepsis care. Topics covered included improving early recognition of paediatric sepsis, the role of technology in sepsis diagnosis, the importance of antimicrobial stewardship, and many more.
- The NSP invited public awareness champions/groups such as the Irish Sepsis Foundation and 'Lil Red's Legacy Sepsis Awareness Campaign to the event and afforded them the opportunity to promote awareness at the event.

Increasing Public Awareness of Sepsis:

- A variety of resources were developed and widely distributed to all hospital groups, CHOs, primary care and the GP Network via HSE and CHI communication links including:
Animated Paediatric videos and social media cuts and are currently being played in waiting rooms and public areas in all CHI hospitals and other clinical areas (see links below).
<https://vimeo.com/467302017/aa0a415dbe>

Posters and credit cards with signs & symptoms of sepsis for both adults and children which are widely distributed at sepsis awareness days & events and displayed locally in each hospital.

- In 2023 a new sepsis information leaflet was developed to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of sepsis in the community for adults, maternity and children and provides advice on how to reduce the risk of developing sepsis. The leaflets were distributed to 1,700 GP surgeries and 1,850 community pharmacies and are translated into 10 languages.
- Currently all emergency ambulances carry signage on the signs and symptoms of Sepsis and in the future all NAS vehicles will carry this signage.
- September was Sepsis Awareness Month, with World Sepsis Day recognised on 13 September. Many events and initiatives took place across our health service to mark World Sepsis Day. These included public awareness stands, staff education sessions, providing sepsis leaflets and lighting up of public buildings. As part of our engagement with the media, we worked closely with patient advocates to highlight the symptoms of sepsis.

- All hospitals had information stands with pull up banners and provided education to staff.
- The NCP liaises with universities and schools and relevant charities to provide education services.

National Public Awareness Campaign:

The HSE and the National Sepsis Team are currently scoping out the optimum approach to a Public Awareness Campaign to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of sepsis and what action people should take if they suspect sepsis. It is envisaged that by increasing awareness of sepsis the public will seek treatment earlier and thereby there will be a reduction in mortality associated with sepsis. This new campaign is currently in the data gathering and research phase and will undertake engagement with families affected by sepsis and healthcare practitioners in the coming weeks.

Quality Assurance on the recognition and management of Sepsis:

- Retrospective audits against the National Clinical Guideline for Sepsis have been undertaken annually since the inception of the guideline (with the exception of 2020 & 2021 due to staff redeployment).
- Concurrent Medical & Surgical Audits have been completed in all acute hospitals in 2023.
- Key learnings from the audits are used to improve care in the early recognition and management of sepsis.
- Paediatric Audits will be completed by the end of 2023
- Maternity Audits are scheduled for 2024
- Over 95% of hospitals have a deteriorating patient committee which includes Sepsis
- The National Sepsis Report (2022) will be published in the coming weeks

Five Year Strategic Plan:

- 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 Plan will build on and enhance the existing priorities and work of the programme.
- The Sepsis programme plan with clear objectives and outcomes for 2024 – 2026 will be complete by the end of this year.

Key Priorities for the National Clinical Programme for Sepsis 2024 – 2026:

- Address Women's Health sepsis awareness in pregnancy/post-pregnancy, including development of a public awareness campaign.
- Development of a quick reference guide for GPs on Sepsis in Children
- Scope project on developing a 'flag' system to incorporate into all GP systems.
- Introduce new metrics regarding sepsis governance, audit and education in acute hospitals streamline Deteriorating Patient & Sepsis programme KPIs & Governance Structures.
- Develop a proposal to engage with academic and research partners to develop a research strategy for Sepsis.

This concludes my Opening Statement.

Thank you

