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PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, 24th April 2024

Neurological care is being undermined by recruitment moratorium and delays in appointing frontline staff, according to the NAI

- Oireachtas briefed on urgent need for national neurological care strategies -

Emerging treatments and recent investment in services are providing new hope for people throughout Ireland living with a neurological condition. However, the current recruitment moratorium and other delays in appointing key frontline staff risks undermining the commitment to neurological care outlined in the current programme for government.

That's according to the [Neurological Alliance of Ireland](#) (NAI) who briefed Oireachtas members on the issue this morning (24.04.24) in the **AV room in Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.**

The NAI, an umbrella body for over thirty non-profit organisations, is calling for a renewed Government commitment to deliver on national strategies for stroke, dementia and neurorehabilitation, and agreed models of care for neurology, epilepsy, stroke, specialist rehabilitation and dementia.

At the briefing, the NAI and a panel of expert speakers highlighted that commitment from Government must reflect the scale of the challenge represented by neurological conditions, which now represent the leading cause of disability worldwide and affect over 860,000 people across Ireland. Over 50,000 people are diagnosed with a neurological condition in Ireland each year, and that number is set to grow significantly with the rise in neurological conditions associated with an ageing population.

In her opening address, **Magdalen Rogers, NAI Executive Director**, said: "According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three of us will develop a neurological condition in our lifetime. Ireland, as a member of the WHO, has signed up to a 10-year framework to prioritise brain health and investment in neurological conditions, recognising that these conditions now represent the greatest challenge to health systems worldwide.

"While we welcome progress made in some areas, we see Government commitments that remain undelivered because of the recruitment freeze and other delays in getting vital services

off the ground. We need a clear signal that this Government will deliver on its promises to people with neurological conditions, their families and communities.”

Richelle Flanagan from Dublin is a registered dietician and a patient representative living with Parkinson’s disease. She shared her lived experience at the briefing: “I was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson’s disease when I was three months pregnant. I had noticed a change in my handwriting which led me to investigate further and eventually led to my diagnosis. I hid it for two years from friends and extended family. I was afraid colleagues and my clients would think less of me, especially as there can be a stigma around neurological conditions and Parkinson’s disease.

“Although Parkinson’s disease can be seen as an older person’s condition, there are many living with early onset Parkinson’s. Research shows that up to 30% of people are diagnosed before they are 60 and 40% are women. A diagnosis before 60 can lead to a loss of employment of 10-20 years. This could be radically improved through early access to multidisciplinary care to support living with Parkinson’s disease. If patients can access care and services from the outset, they can manage their symptoms and live fuller, healthier lives. It’s vital that Government commits to prioritising the care of people living with neurological conditions in Ireland.”

Also speaking at the launch, **Professor Rónán Collins, Consultant and Director of Stroke Services at Tallaght University Hospital**, said: “With an aging population, increasing numbers of people with neurological disease and growing complexity of therapies, it has never been more important to implement the national strategies and models of care which will ensure equitable access to services for people with neurological conditions. Stroke is the leading cause of acquired neurological disability in Ireland, yet a National Stroke Strategy that was commissioned by this Government has seen little or no commitment to investment. It is urgent that we act now to implement key healthcare strategies for stroke and other neurological conditions”.

Other speakers at the briefing included:

- Pascal Derrien, Chair of NAI;
- Professor Sinead Murphy, Clinical Lead, National Neurology Clinical Programme;
- Helen Kavanagh, Programme Manager, Clinical Programme for Rehabilitation Medicine; and
- Dr Sean O Dowd, Clinical Lead, National Clinical Programme for Dementia.

For more information visit: <https://www.patientsdeservebetter.ie/>

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Notes to Editors

Spokespersons available for media interviews:

- Mags Rogers, Executive Director at the NAI;
- Professor Rónán Collins, Clinical Lead, National Clinical Programme Stroke; and
- Richelle Flanagan, person with lived experience of early onset Parkinson's disease.

About the Neurological Alliance of Ireland

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) brings together over thirty non profit organisations to advocate for the rights of the over 860,000 people in Ireland living with a neurological condition.

Founded in 2003, the NAI advocates for the development of quality services for people with neurological conditions. Our campaigns are rooted in the experience of our members and the people and families with whom they work. We provide a united and expert voice on neurological care through advocacy, policy development and awareness raising.