

# Ireland needs 100 more neurology nurses. Patients Deserve Better.



International recommendations and the HSE's own Models of Care indicate that there should be 142 nurse specialists in neurology<sup>1</sup>. Yet there are only 42 WTE nurse specialists in neurology<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, Ireland needs an extra 100 nurse specialists in neurology.

The number of people on the neurology outpatient waiting list is continuing to rise, those waiting more than 18 months has increased by almost 30% in the last year<sup>3</sup>. As of August 2021 there were 23,979 patients on the neurology outpatient waiting list<sup>4</sup>. In addition to this, people with long-term neurological conditions have limited access to the services that help them manage their condition, this results in unnecessary hospital admissions and delays necessary adjustments in medication.

Investing in more nurse specialists in neurology is a cost efficient way of addressing these challenges. Evidence from the UK demonstrates that nurse specialists in neurology can reduce consultant neurologist outpatient time by 40%, assuming responsibility for monitoring and adjusting medication, and reducing (re)admission rates by 50%<sup>5</sup>.

Nurse specialists in neurology have a very significant impact on patients, increasing accessibility of healthcare and improving condition management. Services provided by

nurse specialists in neurology include nurse-led clinics, rapid access clinics, telephone advisory services and outreach services. Significantly improving the quality of care at lower cost, mainly by preventing unnecessary admissions, through advice, information, support, counselling and - with appropriate safeguards - adjustments in medication.

Additional nurse specialists in neurology will free up capacity, reduce waiting times and ensure that patients have access to the specialist support they need to manage their conditions. It will also improve the coordination and continuity of care, reduce attendance at A&E, benefiting both patients and the wider health system<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 1: International and HSE Model of Care Recommendations for Nurse Specialist Staffing in Neurology**

Disease Area	Recommendation	No. of Nurses	Source
Multiple Sclerosis	1 nurse per 315 patients	29	MS Specialist Nursing in the UK (2018) Results from the 2018 MS Nurse Mapping Survey
Headache	1 nurse per 140,000 population	36	Neurology Model of Care for Ireland (2016) page 164
Epilepsy	1 nurse per 140,000 population	36	Epilepsy Model Of Care for Ireland (2016) page 22
Parkinson's Disease	1 nurse per 300 patients	31	NICE Guideline and Neurology Model of Care for Ireland (2016)
Rare Diseases	1 nurse per 500,000 population	10	Local Adult Neurology Services for the Next Decade (Royal College Physicians, Association of British Neurologists June 2011)
Total		142	

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## Recommendations for neurology centres based on the recommended ratios for Nurse Specialist Staffing in Neurology

Hospital	Recommendation	Current	Shortfall
University Hospital Limerick	11	3	8
Sligo University Hospital	7	3	4
University Hospital Waterford	6	1	5
Cork University Hospital	20	4	16
University Hospital Galway	13	4	9
Beaumont Hospital	15	10	5
St Vincent's University Hospital	22	4	17
St James's Hospital	14	4	10
Mater Misericordiae University Hospital	14	6	8
Tallaght University Hospital	20	3.5	17

### MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the campaign, visit [www.patientsdeservebetter.ie](http://www.patientsdeservebetter.ie) or email [advocacy@nai.ie](mailto:advocacy@nai.ie)

### Neurological Alliance of Ireland

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) brings together 30 non-profit organisations to advocate for the rights of 800,000 people in Ireland living with a neurological condition.

Neurological conditions affect the brain and spinal cord. They are the leading cause of disability throughout the world and include many common conditions such as stroke, dementia, migraine, epilepsy and acquired brain injury as well as rare and genetic conditions.

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 research, advocacy, policy development, and education.

**Further information is available at [www.nai.ie](http://www.nai.ie)**

<sup>1</sup> MS Specialist Nursing in the UK (2018) Results from the 2018 MS Nurse Mapping Survey; Neurology Model of Care for Ireland (2016); Epilepsy Model Of Care for Ireland (2016); Local Adult Neurology Services for the Next Decade (Royal College Physicians, Association of British Neurologists June 2011); Christodoulou M. Neurological nurse specialists: a vital resource under threat. *Lancet Neurol.* 2012 Mar;11(3):210-1. doi: 10.1016/S1474-4422(12)70030-3. PMID: 22341030.

<sup>2</sup> Neurological Association of Ireland "Resourcing of Neurology Services in Ireland Five Years On 2015-2020", 2021 [https://www.nai.ie/assets/45/B24F59A3-51B6-452C-90A7F7CA1784BA5B\\_document/Neurology\\_Services\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_DESIGN\\_VERSION\\_march\\_1.pdf](https://www.nai.ie/assets/45/B24F59A3-51B6-452C-90A7F7CA1784BA5B_document/Neurology_Services_Report_FINAL_DESIGN_VERSION_march_1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ntpf.ie/home/pdf//2021/04/nationalnumbers/out-patient/National02.pdf>; From 6,635 to 8,601 in the 12 months to August 2021, an increase of 29.63%, <https://www.ntpf.ie/home/pdf//2020/08/nationalnumbers/out-patient/National02.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ntpf.ie/home/pdf//2021/08/nationalnumbers/out-patient/National02.pdf>;

<sup>5</sup> Royal College of Physicians. Local adult neurology services for the next decade. Report of a working party. London: RCP, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Higgins A; Elliott N; Varley J; Tyrrell E; Downes C; Begley C; Normand C; Doherty C; Clarke M (2017) An evaluation of the role of the Epilepsy Specialist Nurse and the impact on care: SENSE study: Key findings. Dublin: Epilepsy Ireland.