



NEUROLOGICAL ALLIANCE  
of IRELAND

REPORT ON  
NATIONAL SURVEY OF  
NEUROLOGY SERVICES  
2015

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) is the national umbrella for over 30 neurological charities. The NAI, in collaboration with the National Clinical Programme for Neurology circulated a self report survey to eleven neurology centres between January and March 2015.

### KEY FINDINGS

1. **DEFICITS IN STAFFING** across all neurology centres with little or no access to multidisciplinary teams in Sligo, Limerick and Waterford.
2. **LACK OF DEDICATED BEDS** with only six of eleven centres having dedicated neurology beds. These are frequently required for other specialties within the hospital and not available to neurology.
3. **UNACCEPTABLE WAITING LISTS FOR TESTS** Waiting lists for MRI scanning is a significant problem with 7 centres having waiting lists of a year or more.
4. **CRITICAL LACK OF NEUROREHABILITATION SERVICES** Eight of the centres reported limited or very limited access to hospital based neurorehabilitation services while ten of the eleven centres reported limited or very limited access to neurorehabilitation services in the community.

### CALL FOR ACTION

The NAI is calling for a targeted funding programme to address critical deficits in neurology services and for the development of neurorehabilitation services which are crucial to supporting recovery and preventing disability.

1. **ENSURE ACCESS TO MULTIDISCIPLINARY CARE** All neurological patients nationwide must be given equal access to multidisciplinary care by addressing critical staff shortages in neurology services.
2. **RINGFENCED DEDICATED NEUROLOGY BEDS** must be made available to each neurology service, supported by multidisciplinary staff with appropriate training and experience.
3. **TACKLE LONG WAITING TIMES FOR MRI SCANNING** Immediate steps must be taken to address long waiting lists and access to MRI scanning nationwide.
4. **INVEST IN NEUROREHABILITATION SERVICES** by implementing the recommendations of the National Policy and Strategy for Neurorehabilitation Services in Ireland<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health (2011) National Policy and Strategy for the Provision of Neurorehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015

## HOW DOES IRELAND COMPARE?

NAI compared the survey findings with the recommended requirements for neurology services issued by the Association of British Neurologists (2011)<sup>2</sup>

1. The recommended ratio is for one consultant neurologist per 70,000 population. This is exceeded within every hospital group and in one hospital group (Mid West) the ratio is 1:200,000
2. Less than two thirds of the minimum recommended number (90 beds) of dedicated inpatient beds are available to support the neurology service nationwide.
3. The number of specialist nurses is significantly below what is recommended for our population with less than half the recommended number of MS nurses and less than a third of specialist nurses for Parkinson's disease (27 MS and 27 PD nurses recommended)

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### Staffing

- Four of the 11 hospitals reported no dedicated occupational therapy services for neurology patients.
- Five neurology centres reported no dedicated speech and language therapist for neurology patients.
- Five neurology centres reported no dedicated medical social worker for neurology patients, including Cork University Hospital which is one of two national neuroscience centres in Ireland.
- Only Beaumont and Tallaght Hospital have dedicated neuropsychology services available to patients. Within these centres, waiting lists can be up to one year.
- Sligo hospital reports no dedicated posts for any of the core supporting therapies of occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and neuropsychology. The regional centres of Limerick and Waterford also report very limited access to dedicated allied health professional staffing.

**Every hospital group exceeds the ratio for consultant neurologists for our population**

*Figure 1: Consultant Neurology Staffing in Neurology Centres compared to ABN recommended levels (information obtained from self reporting by neurology centres January February 2015)*

Hospital Group	Neurology Centers	Ratio neurologist: population Recommended 1:70,000
DUBLIN NORTH EAST 1 center. Pop 800,000	Beaumont	1:181,818
DUBLIN MIDLAND 2 centers. Pop 800,000	St James Hospital Tallaght Hospital	1:114,285
SOUTH/SOUTH WEST 3 centers. Pop 850,000	Cork University Hospital Waterford Regional Hospital Mercy University Hospital	1:106,250
WEST/NORTH WEST 2 centers. 700,000	University Hospital Galway Sligo Regional Hospital	1:185,185
MID-WEST 1 center. Pop 400,000	Mid-Western Regional Hospital Limerick	1:200,000
EAST 2 centers. Pop 1,000,000	Mater Misericordiae University Hospital St Vincents University Hospital	1:147,050

<sup>2</sup> Royal College of Physicians (2011) Local adult neurology services for the next decade. Report of a working party

### Waiting Times for MRI

No centre has MRI access for routine referrals in under 2 months and 7 of the eleven neurology centres cannot get access within 1 year of referral.

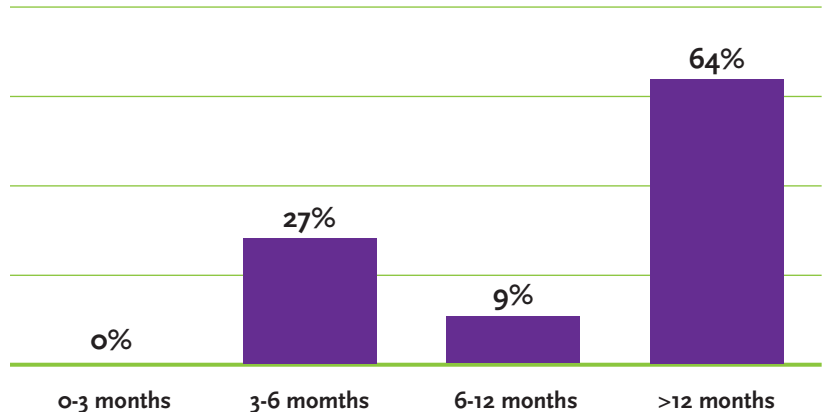


Figure 2: Waiting times for MRI across eleven neurology centres (information obtained from self reporting from neurology centres January/February 2015)

#### List of NAI Member Organisations

- Acquired Brain injury Ireland
- Aphasia Ireland
- Alzheimer Society of Ireland
- Aware
- Bloomfield Health Services
- Cheshire Ireland
- Chronic Pain Ireland
- Dystonia Ireland
- Enable Ireland
- Epilepsy Ireland
- Friedreich's Ataxia Society of Ireland
- Headway
- Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland
- Irish Heart Foundation
- Irish Hospice Foundation
- Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association
- Migraine Association of Ireland
- Move4Parkinsons
- Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland
- Muscular Dystrophy Ireland
- Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland
- North West MS Therapy Centre
- Parkinson's Association of Ireland
- Post Polio Support group
- Syringomyelia Support group of Ireland
- Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland
- The Rehab Group

#### Associate Members

- Brain Tumour Ireland
- PSPA Ireland
- Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists
- Myaware

### Community Neurorehabilitation Services

Community neurorehabilitation services are vital to supporting recovery and preventing disability among people with neurological conditions. Ten of the eleven centres reported limited, very limited or no access to community neurorehabilitation services.

### About the Neurological Alliance of Ireland

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland is the national umbrella of charities representing people with neurological conditions and their families. We work to promote the development of services and supports for all those affected by neurological conditions through advocacy & awareness raising, policy development and supporting research.

#### Neurological Alliance of Ireland

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Charity Number: CHY: 14889