



Irish Cancer Society

Budget 2020 Submission

1. Reduce charges for cancer patients now

There are financial challenges facing patients and families that desperately need to be addressed now. Money worries are hitting families as hard as the emotional and psychological stresses of a diagnosis, and take years to recover from. The Irish Cancer Society has long campaigned for the Government to reduce statutory charges and support patients financially.

IN BUDGET 2020, WE ARE CALLING FOR:

- The removal of inpatient charges for cancer patients (currently €80 a visit to a max of €800 a year)
- A reduction in the Drugs Payment Scheme threshold to €100 for families and €72 for single people (currently €124 per month)
- The removal of the prescription charge (currently €2 per item up to a max. of €20 for under-70s)
- Reduced parking charges for cancer patients



Marie Moran, a breast cancer survivor from Co. Mayo, faced inpatient charges while dealing with a cancer diagnosis during pregnancy. She said:

“It was such a whirlwind. I was diagnosed with breast cancer 32 weeks into my pregnancy. It was such a stressful time for me, physically and emotionally, and to be landed with bills of €80 for each treatment session was a real shock. When bills quickly turned into final notices demanding payments, it caused me so much stress and worry at an already difficult time.”



Gerry Carroll, a leukaemia survivor aged 57, was diagnosed in January 2014. During his treatment Gerry had to stay as an inpatient at Beaumont Hospital for 115 days, and his wife, Trish, was hit by huge parking costs. He said:

“During that time, my wife, Trish, came to visit me twice a day, five days a week. It cost her almost €1,200 in parking charges alone. That’s a lot of money. If Trish was able to get free parking, or even a reduced rate it would’ve been a great help to us.”



2. Resource Government's cancer commitments

The Government needs to stand up for cancer patients and back up its own commitments with the necessary investment.

Not only have resources not been given to the National Cancer Control Programme in 2019 to deliver new initiatives promised in the National Cancer Strategy, but inadequate funding has been provided to deliver existing services to a growing number of cancer patients. This includes areas such as radiotherapy, rapid access clinics and diagnostics, and has directly impacted cancer patients.

In Budget 2020, we need to see fresh investment to set cancer services back on the right path, to ensure patients are diagnosed in the right place at the right time, and to make sure that every patient has the opportunity to access the best possible care and treatment.

FUNDING IS REQUIRED TO:

- Meet National Cancer Strategy Key Performance Indicators
- Complete centralisation of cancer surgery
- Increase patient participation in clinical trials
- Ensure that GPs have direct access to diagnostics and can make e-referrals
- Increase state funding for vital Night Nursing services
- Kick-start the establishment of a Comprehensive Cancer Centre
- Resource the national psycho-oncology network
- Roll-out of HPV testing as primary cervical screening test



Client of the Irish Cancer Society Night Nursing service:

“It allowed us to have one last wonderful Christmas with Mam at home. She was so happy in her last couple of weeks, in her own home, that it was almost hard to believe her illness was so serious. A very tough illness incredibly had a beautiful ending. Our family often talk of your nurses and how special they really are.”

3. Ensure a better future for everyone

We know that with the right supports and investment, we can reduce the number of cancers being diagnosed, catch cancers at their earliest possible stage and, as a result, save lives.

Supporting the full implementation of the National Cancer Strategy and the Sláintecare report and implementation plans can dramatically improve care, significantly reduce waiting times for vital cancer tests and support the growing number of health professionals needed to support a growing and ageing population.

The Irish Cancer Society wants to stop preventable cancers and for patients who do get cancer to have best in class treatment and care.

TO SUPPORT THESE LONG-TERMS AMBITIONS, WE CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO:

- Increase excise duty on cigarettes by 76c
- Bring excise duty on roll-your-own tobacco in line with cigarettes
- Introduce a new tax rate for heated tobacco products aligned to cigarettes
- Increase funding for smoking quit supports that work
- Fund the implementation of the Skin Cancer Prevention Action Plan
- Invest in BowelScreen to ensure its extension in 2021
- Resource the Sláintecare transition fund
- Unlock savings of €50m by increasing use of biosimilars



Craig Sinclair, Director of the World Health Organisation's Collaborative Centre for UV Radiation and Head of Cancer Prevention at Cancer Council Victoria said:

“Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. In Australia, we started innovative public awareness campaigns 30 years ago, and we are now seeing the results of these with a downward trend in melanoma cases in younger age groups. It is vitally important that a comprehensive and well-resourced plan is put in place by the Irish government to tackle skin cancer in Ireland, or unfortunately, the significant human and financial burden of skin cancer will continue to increase.”