



Mr. Simon Harris TD,
Minister for Health,
Department of Health,
Miesian Plaza,
50-58 Lower Baggot Street,
Dublin 2

28th May 2020

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write further to today's meeting of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

As you are aware, throughout this pandemic the NPHE has maintained a consistent focus on mortality, being very cognisant of the sad toll of lost loved ones on families, and of the need to continue to direct public health measures and responses to limit the burden of mortality.

In the context of this ongoing work, the NPHE has overseen the conduct of a comparative analysis of pandemic-related mortality, and on behalf of the NPHE, please find enclosed the document entitled *"COVID-19: Comparison of Mortality Rates between Ireland and other countries in EU and internationally"*, for your consideration and approval, with a view to its publication.

As you are aware, comparative analysis of pandemic-related mortality between different countries is clearly important to describe the impact of the pandemic on the population, to inform health system responses and to assess the effectiveness of countermeasures taken at national level by different countries. Countries throughout the world have reported very different mortality experiences to date. However, the paper identifies that it is difficult to draw definitive comparisons between countries in particular because of widespread differences in the relative numbers of people tested, differences in mortality case definitions and reporting practices, as well as differences in demography, geography and health system responses.

It is noteworthy that Ireland reports both confirmed and probable deaths from COVID-19 in all settings, in contrast to a number of comparable health systems. Also, because mortality reporting has been a particular focus of the NPHE and our public health system, Ireland has been in a position to report comprehensively on mortality, often before other countries.

As you know, from the outset of this pandemic, Ireland has directed its surveillance systems and public health expertise to respond to COVID-19 in long-term residential care settings.

Importantly, the paper identifies that mortality in Ireland has been within the lower range in overall terms in comparison with similar health systems, particularly the UK and a number of other European Member States.

I also enclose a copy of the letter which has been forwarded to the HSE CEO arising from today's NPHET meeting.

I would be happy to discuss further, should you wish.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Holohan', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer

Chair of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team

cc. Ms Elizabeth Canavan, Department of the Taoiseach and Chair of the Senior Officials Group for COVID-19