IRELAND

Access Restrictions in Ireland

To make decisions about coverage and reimbursement, Ireland uses quality-adjusted life year (QALY)-based assessments conducted by the National Centre for Pharmacoconomics (NCPE). NCPE generally recommends that medicines that fall below €45,000 ($50,987) cost per QALY be reimbursed by the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Irish Department of Health, while medicines that fall above this threshold are usually not covered. This arbitrary cost-effectiveness threshold is applied only to medicines. Additionally, due to budgetary constraints within HSE, even when drugs are approved by NCPE, patients do not automatically receive access to the treatment. These dynamics result in significant access barriers for Irish patients who are suffering from serious and complex conditions.

“[Treatment is] funded by the Governments in 20 other countries in Europe, changing the lives of patients there, but not in Ireland…Time is not a luxury for Sam and the other 25 children in Ireland waiting on this drug.”

Parent of a child with Spinal Muscular Atrophy in Ireland

Despite suffering from paralysis and pain for years, Kerri Ann, a patient with multiple sclerosis (MS) is faced with a lengthy delay before receiving treatment. Her mother, Kim, said, “We’re talking one to two years by the time a treatment plan is in place, during which time that demyelination in the brain will continue to wear away at the covers on her nerve cells – it’s more irreparable damage.” The CEO of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland, who is working to improve access for patients, believes “people with MS should have access to the right treatment at the right time. This may seem like a very basic demand, and one that it would be hard to refuse, but the truth is that this is not the situation for many people in Ireland today.”

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2 MS Ireland. “Patients Deserve Better.” At https://www.patientsdeservebetter.ie/the-problem/
3 National Centre for Pharmacoconomics (NCPE). http://www.ncpe.ie/about/
5 “Irish patients denied access to drugs made in Ireland.” The Irish Times. September 2018.
7 “Kerri Ann in limbo as she faces long wait.” Belfast Media Group, August 2018.
8 “MSunderstood Café in Dublin Gives Customers Glimpse into Life of MS Patients.” Multiple Sclerosis News Today, April 2018.