

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BY DEPUTY
G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st APRIL 2008

Question

Would the Minister advise how frequently pillows are renewed within the hospitals under his administration, whether they are checked for the aspergillus fumigatus fungus and, if not, why not?

Answer

Aspergillus species are fungal organisms which are widely distributed within the natural environment. The fungus is frequently found in decaying materials, plants, airborne dusts and any other medium that involves disturbing potentially mouldy material. It is only very rarely that the health care environment is implicated in disease transmission from these fungi – except for those patients who are immuno-suppressed (for example, following organ transplant). Special measures are taken to ensure that patients who are immuno suppressed are protected from such bacteria and from other threats to their health and wellbeing.

As to the specific matter of hospital pillows, these are encased in a protective plastic cover and this prevents any emergent fungi causing a threat to patient care and the plastic cover, of course, allows for decontamination as the inpatient leaves the ward, to be replaced by another. (Needless to say, damaged plastic covers are replaced as necessary and contaminated pillows can be washed to the requisite temperature in the Hospital Laundry, which has special technologies and working practices which enables this threat – and other infection threats – to be controlled and managed).

Monitoring – or checking – is thus not necessary.