

28th May 2012

IAEM demands absolute commitment to resolve Emergency Department overcrowding for once and for all

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) welcomes the public commitment of the Minister for Health, Dr. James Reilly TD, to implement the recommendations of the HIQA Tallaght report* in full and that the recommendations will be applied to all acute hospitals. We also welcome his reiteration of the '6 hour standard', whereby a patient should be either admitted or discharged within 6 hours of their arrival to an Emergency Department (ED) on 95% of occasions and in 100% of cases by 9 hours. This means that all admitted patients without exception must be placed on a ward within 9 hours, with 95% accommodated within 6 hours.

IAEM has campaigned for many years to have the system-wide problems which lead to the lodging of inpatients in EDs addressed. We have consistently advocated on behalf of our patients both in terms of their basic human dignity and also the internationally recognised risks of unnecessary death or poorer health outcomes as a result of being boarded in an ED.

Following the unannounced HIQA visit in August 2011, Tallaght Hospital fixed its trolley problem within 72 hours and has maintained an extremely low number of patients waiting for admission ever since. A change in hospital management and a new management focus abolished the risk almost overnight, at little extra financial cost. This sense of urgency and priority must be applied to all acute hospitals immediately. Given the criticisms made by HIQA of the previous Tallaght management and the serious concerns expressed by Dr. Tracey Cooper, CEO of HIQA, to the Oireachtas Health Committee about the absence of management 'leadership at local level' there needs to be clear, unambiguous direction from the Government, the Minister, HSE and SDU that **ED overcrowding in Ireland is no longer acceptable**. This commitment must be absolute and ongoing and there should be no attempts either to manipulate figures or definitions in an attempt to minimise the extent of the ED overcrowding problem or to loosen or disregard targets. The Association will assist the implementation of the HIQA recommendations in every way possible. Until this issue is addressed for once and for all, thousands more patients will be subject to the misery and risk of trolleys.

This nettle must be finally grasped by all those who are in positions of responsibility nationwide. The Association intends to intensively monitor progress towards elimination of the inpatient boarder problem to ensure the Minister's stated deadline of full abolition within six months is achieved.

* [Report of the Investigation into the Quality, Safety and Governance of the care provided by the Adelaide and Meath Hospital, incorporating the National Children's Hospital for patients who require Acute Admission.](#) Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) - May 2012.

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