

17<sup>th</sup> May 2012

## **IAEM welcomes publication of HIQA Report and calls on the Minister to immediately implement its national recommendations**

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) welcomes the *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* by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). The report follows concerns for the safety, dignity and privacy of admitted patients who were boarded on an open corridor adjacent to the Emergency Department (ED), concerns which were expressed to HIQA by Consultants in Emergency Medicine at the hospital. These concerns and the many steps taken by Consultants in Emergency Medicine in their fruitless attempts to have these concerns acted upon by hospital management were revealed at the Coroner's Inquests that followed the tragic deaths of two admitted patient who were boarded on a corridor in the ED.

The Association commends HIQA on the thoroughness of its investigation. HIQA concluded that the hospital failed to address the patient safety concerns raised by the Consultants in Emergency Medicine and persisted with a policy which allowed large numbers of admitted patients be accommodated in a virtual limbo on corridors, in alcoves and in front of fire escapes without access to oxygen ports, monitoring equipment or even basic sanitation.

The investigation also confirmed that there was a suite of hospital-wide factors contributing to ongoing ED overcrowding, which were not addressed either by the hospital's management or the overseeing hospital Board. These allowed significant numbers of delayed discharges, excessive average lengths of stay for a variety of conditions and suboptimal day surgery/same day surgical admission rates to persist unchecked and contribute to this unacceptable and dangerous situation.

IAEM notes the finding of corporate governance failure and urges the Minister to reassure the public that the performance and accountability of all hospital management teams will be improved and better monitored in the future.

It is striking that when HIQA issued its edict to the new hospital CEO on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011, the hospital immediately ceased lodging inpatient boarders on the corridor adjacent to the ED. The problem disappeared within 72 hours confirming that the capacity to solve the problem lay with the hospital rather than the ED. The inability or unwillingness to solve the problem before this was a result of the systematic failure of previous hospital management.

The Association has continually highlighted chronic ED overcrowding nationally. Although the situation at the now renamed Tallaght Hospital has markedly improved, ED overcrowding remains a daily risk to patient safety in many other hospitals around the country, a problem made worse in the past 12 months by further bed closures. A persistent but immoral belief that it is acceptable to lodge inpatients in or adjacent to EDs seems to underpin bed closures, as hospitals attempt to save money at all costs.

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HIQA's assessment of the contributing factors in Tallaght vindicates the international evidence, publicised by IAEM over many years, that it is overwhelmingly factors outside the ED that result in ED overcrowding and that the on-going failure to address these factors poses a serious threat to the life, wellbeing and dignity of both admitted patients and those waiting to access Emergency Care.

IAEM calls on the Minister to implement the national recommendations with immediate effect. Each hospital management team and/or Board in Ireland must read this sobering report today and prepare to be held responsible by the Minister and the Irish public for addressing the underlying causes of ED overcrowding.

HIQA's report reflects IAEM's frustration for many years now. The failure of successive administrations to resolve ED overcrowding once and for all, despite public proclamations since 2007 that ED overcrowding is their 'number one' political and managerial priority, has caused unnecessary, untold pain and suffering to thousands of patients, their families and front-line staff who continue to be placed in harm's way on a daily basis in our overcrowded EDs.