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## IAEM confirms shortages of Senior Decision Makers in Emergency Departments

The Comptroller and Auditor General's [\*Special Report on Emergency Departments\*](#), published last month, rightly highlights the shortage of *Senior Decision Makers*<sup>1</sup> in Ireland's Emergency Departments (EDs). Given that there are 32 hospitals with 24 hour EDs and a mere 54 substantive Consultants in Emergency Medicine, the provision of *Senior Decision Makers* in the country's EDs is woefully inadequate. This shortage is compounded by evidence gathered by the Association of increasing either non- or under-provision of locum cover to replace Consultants who are on annual leave, study leave or who have retired.

As all Consultants in Emergency Medicine in Ireland are on onerous rotas, the necessity for there to be adequate locum cover is particularly important. In the absence of a Consultant who is on leave, then the already limited number of *Senior Decision Makers* is further reduced with there being nights and weekends without a Consultant in Emergency Medicine available. The training of Consultants in Emergency Medicine is unique to the specialty and the historical cross cover arrangements whereby EDs were nominally and administratively 'covered' by Consultants from other specialties is no longer acceptable.

IAEM is calling on the HSE to bring forward urgently a comprehensive programme of Consultant expansion to increase the number of *Senior Decision Makers* in the country's EDs. These Consultants should be concentrated in a smaller number of EDs, not the current 32 which for a country of Ireland's size is unsustainable. As the national Emergency Medicine Specialist Registrar (SpR) Training programme is currently producing approximately 5 well trained doctors per year, ready to take up the new Consultant posts, it is unconscionable for the HSE to miss this opportunity to increase the number of *Senior Decision Makers* in Ireland's EDs. In the absence of Consultant expansion this expensively trained group of doctors will be lost overseas.

Furthermore intensive efforts will need to be made by the HSE to ensure that a pool of suitably trained and qualified doctors is available to provide full locum cover for Consultants who are on annual, study or other legitimate forms of leave to which they are entitled.

<sup>1</sup> Senior Decision Makers are defined as Year 4 or 5 Specialist Registrars or Consultants in Emergency Medicine in the C&AG's Report

**President:**

Mr. Fergal Hickey FRCS, FRCSEd, DA(UK), FCEM  
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

Sligo General Hospital  
The Mall  
Sligo  
Ireland

Tel No: +353 71 9174505  
Fax No: +353 71 9174646

**Secretary:**

Mr. James Binchy FRCSEd, Dip.Med.Tox., FCEM.  
Consultant in Emergency Medicine,

University College Hospital  
Newcastle Road,  
Galway,  
Ireland

Tel No: +353 91 542 766  
Fax No: +353 91 520 154

**Treasurer:**

Mr. Niall O'Connor DCH, DOBs, MRCP, FRCSEd, FCEM  
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital  
Drogheda  
Co. Louth  
Ireland

Tel No: +353 41 9874791  
Fax No: +353 41 9874799