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IAEM marks 3rd Anniversary of Minister's declaration that Emergency Department overcrowding was a 'national emergency'

On 26th March 2006, the then (and current) Minister for Health & Children, Mary Harney TD declared that the problem of persistent, severe Emergency Department (ED) overcrowding was a 'national emergency'. She was absolutely correct in her assessment and quickly followed this up with the creation of the 'A&E (sic) Taskforce' to investigate and address the issue. In spite of the group producing a very valuable report, *Report of the Emergency Department Task Force*¹, finally published in June 2007, very little real progress has occurred. The majority of the issues raised in the report remain unaddressed and the reports recommendations have not been implemented.

It appears that, despite the fact that ED overcrowding is as bad or worse in many hospitals as it was at the time of the Minister's declaration, there is no political interest in this important public health issue. Sadly the proven increase in patient mortality and morbidity resulting from ED overcrowding seems not to provoke the outrage and calls to action that it should.

An article setting out in detail the background to this issue was published in the Irish Medical Times² on 7th April 2009.

- 1 Report of the Emergency Department Taskforce, HSE, June 2007. Available at <http://www.hse.ie/eng/Publications/Hospitals/ECTaskForce.html> (Accessed 7th April 2009)
- 2 Hickey F. Three years on and nothing is done. Irish Medical Times 7th April 2009. Available at http://www.imt.ie/opinion/2009/04/three_years_on_and_nothing_is.html (Accessed 7th April 2009)

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