

29<sup>th</sup> March 2007

## **IAEM marks the First Anniversary of the Minister for Health and Children's "national emergency" speech.**

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) notes the passing of a full year since the Minister for Health and Children declared that the situation of patients waiting in the country's Emergency Departments for days for admission to a hospital bed was a "national emergency" and established the A&E (Emergency Department) Taskforce.

The IAEM disputes the widely publicised claims by the Minister that the issue has been or is well on its way to being solved.

The facts remain:

1. Large numbers of patients continue to wait for unacceptably long periods on trolleys in Emergency Departments (EDs) while awaiting an inpatient bed (inpatient boarders)
2. While many departments experienced a transient reduction in the numbers of inpatient boarders in late 2006, several departments experienced new records for the number of inpatient boarders in January and February 2007.
3. The statistics for the numbers of inpatient boarders being returned by many individual hospitals to the HSE centrally, and published on their website, bear little relationship to the reality of what is happening in their EDs
4. The recent motorway crashes are a timely reminder that on many days throughout the year most EDs would be unable to safely manage such an influx of patients because of Departments being inadequately resourced and full of patients who should be in hospital beds.

While politicians continue to be deluded by figures suggesting improvements in ED overcrowding, the undeniable reality is that large numbers of elderly, ill and injured patients continue to languish for unacceptably long periods on trolleys in many of the country's EDs.

The IAEM calls for the immediate publication of the Taskforce Report and for the Minister to guarantee the significant funding necessary to implement the recommendations of the Report.

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