

11th December 2007

IAEM notes increase in Government Levy for attending an Emergency Department

In the recent budget, the Minister for Finance increased the (sic) “A&E Statutory Charge”, i.e. the levy the state charges many of its citizens for attending an Emergency Department (ED), by 10% to €66. When originally introduced, the charge was a simplistic and crude attempt to ostensibly reduce attendance at the state’s EDs. The evidence both nationally and internationally is that such fiscal manoeuvres have little impact of ED attendances. In reality many hospitals fail to collect the charge and many people who could be regarded by some as “abusing” the ED service are not liable for the charge anyway.

The IAEM is concerned that the government continues to ignore the root causes of ED overcrowding and appears to naively and vainly hope that by making attendance at an ED more expensive it will have an impact on the overcrowding problem.

The IAEM asks

1. Can the public expect that the revenue raised will be directly used to contribute to the cost of urgently upgrading EDs or will they simply be expected to pay more for persistent overcrowding and prolonged trolley waits?
2. Will patients who attend the seven EDs, that were deemed unfit for purpose by the Emergency Department Task Force Report¹ in their review of eighteen hospitals, be expected to pay these increased charges?

¹ Emergency Department Task Force Report. Health Services Executive; June 2007.

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