

6th November 2007

HSE fails to meet its own 12 Hour target

The 31st October 2007 was the deadline set by the HSE by which time **no patient would wait in an Emergency Department for more than 12 hours for admission from the moment that the decision to admit had been made.** As of the date of the deadline 17% of the 96 patients waiting for admission had waited more than 12 hours. This represents a significant failure to achieve this modest target.

The Emergency Department Task Force Report, which was completed in December 2006 but not published by the HSE until early June 2007, requires the HSE to move to a situation whereby all patients who attend an Emergency Department (ED) will have been admitted or discharged within 6 hours of their arrival to the ED. Rather than move to this target the HSE opted for a series of less onerous intermediate targets which were not patient centred.

The only acceptable measure of patient "waiting time" in EDs is the time from patient arrival to when the patient leaves the department. This measure reflects the patient's true experience of waiting for emergency care or admission. The HSE currently only starts the clock at the time of the decision to admit. The time a patient waits before this point is not recorded and in fact, most EDs do not have computer systems which accurately record the time of decision to admit. Furthermore the "HSE clock" is stopped when a bed is identified for a patient, even though it often takes a further 1 or 2 hours for the bed to be ready for the patient. The HSE refuses to use the most realistic, transparent and honest measure of patient waiting times in EDs but instead records and monitors an unreliable time-interval which is an under-representation of the real time that patients are waiting.

The IAEM calls on the HSE to

- Immediately and publicly accept that there is an ongoing problem of patients spending prolonged periods in EDs while awaiting an inpatient bed

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- Set a date for the implementation of the *Emergency Department Task Force*'s recommendation for a **6 hour door-to-door target**.
- Measure and publish the **total time** that a patient spends in an Emergency Department rather than just a portion of it.
- Implement the recommendations of the *Emergency Department Taskforce Report* in full.

If the HSE is not going to implement the *Emergency Department Task Force Report* let it state its reasons for not doing so, and justify why, in a wealthy western democracy, it is acceptable for ill patients to spend prolonged periods on a hospital trolley while awaiting a hospital bed.