

14<sup>th</sup> June 2011

## **IAEM expresses dismay about prospects of prolonged patient waiting times in Emergency Departments as a result of worsening medical staff shortages from July 2011**

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) has consistently highlighted the Health Service Executive's (HSE's) ongoing inability to recruit sufficient junior doctors to the country's Emergency Departments (EDs). Despite many EDs having had vacancies and difficulties filling their compliment of Senior House Officer and particularly Middle Grade posts for the past 18 months, the situation on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011 (the changeover day) will be substantially worse than anything that has been seen before. Whilst we are producing more doctors than ever before in Ireland, the situation is worsening and the HSE must urgently reconsider its approach to the matter.

A detailed ED manpower survey is being carried out by the IAEM this week, the preliminary results of which unfortunately confirm our worst fears. Many of our EDs face significant challenges in maintaining full 24/7 cover. The precipitous curtailment of services due to medical staffing shortages will be to the detriment of patient care and the health service in general.

Furthermore, the loss of medical staff both in the ED and front-line specialties, compounded by worsening ED overcrowding, will undoubtedly result in even more prolonged waiting for patients in Ireland's EDs. The IAEM fears that prolonged ED waiting times for patients will lead to delayed treatment and potential avoidable harm.

We urgently call on the new board of the HSE to adopt immediate rigorous contingency planning to minimise the disruption to national ED services caused by this staffing shortage and to ensure that ED services can be provided to all patients safely on an ongoing basis.

**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. John McInerney FRCSEd, DipIMC, FCEM.  
Consultant in Emergency Medicine,

Mater Misericordiae University Hospital  
Eccles St.  
Dublin 7  
Ireland

Tel No: +353 1 803 4342  
Fax No: +353 1 803 2850

**Treasurer:**

Mr. Niall O'Connor DCH, DObs, MRCPG, 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