

21<sup>st</sup> December 2011

## **IAEM urges the Minister of Health to act immediately to eliminate predictable avoidable deaths related to deteriorating Emergency Department overcrowding**

It is now over 6 months since the Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly TD announced the establishment of the Special Delivery Unit (SDU) with the prime objective to tackle chronic Emergency Department (ED) overcrowding. Unfortunately widespread ED overcrowding continues to deteriorate and our patients continue to be exposed to unnecessary harm on a daily basis.

As we approach another New Year in 2012, the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) calls on the Minister, as a fellow doctor, to remember the most basic, historic tenet of clinical medicine, namely *primum non nocere* or 'First, do no harm'. IAEM (and the SDU) know conclusively that ED overcrowding is associated with increased preventable deaths and illness for patients both admitted through overcrowded EDs and those discharged back into the community from these same EDs. We also know that ED overcrowding is exacerbated by reductions in bed capacity both in our acute hospitals and community care facilities.

Reduction of community beds by budgetary constraints and diversion of patients into public hospitals who can no longer afford private health insurance will both exacerbate the current precarious safety of emergency care for all ED patients.

IAEM therefore once again urges the Minister to mandate adoption of the measures contained in the [IAEM Position Paper on the role of the Full Capacity Protocol \(FCP\) in the Management of ED Overcrowding September 2011](#) which promotes the sensible and safe adage of *prevention is better than cure*.

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