

31st August 2011

IAEM welcomes HIQA Directive to AMNCH, Tallaght to stop placing patients awaiting admission on trolleys around its Emergency Department and expects application to all hospitals

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine welcomes the HIQA directive requiring the management of AMNCH, Tallaght to cease the practice of lodging hospital inpatients on trolleys in the corridors around its Emergency Department (ED) effective from 1st September 2011.

For many years IAEM has been highlighting the significant patient safety risks associated with the widespread practice of hospitals choosing to keep hospital inpatients on trolleys in and around their EDs, even though this practice is associated with proven increases in mortality and morbidity for patients. The Association is therefore encouraged that HIQA has taken a firm line on this unacceptable practice. While the directive was issued to AMNCH, Tallaght, this practice occurs in a significant number of hospitals around the country and it is clear that the safety issue which prompted the HIQA directive equally applies in these other hospitals. IAEM therefore calls on all hospitals which have hitherto allowed the practice of patients being detained in or around the ED, after a decision has been made that the patient requires hospital admission, to immediately desist from this policy which has such proven deleterious affects.

Not only is there national evidence of harm, there is a large body of international evidence which confirms that this policy results in additional (and therefore avoidable) deaths, worsening morbidity and a failure to deliver time-critical interventions to those sick patients who need them. As no ED can be expected to function simultaneously as an inpatient ward and an Emergency Department, this is not surprising.

It is important that semantics are not used to avoid the implications of the HIQA directive. Where inpatients are lodged in an ED, whether on corridors, in non-clinical environments, sharing cubicle spaces designated for only one patient for hygiene reasons or lodged in the circulation areas of EDs, it needs to be appreciated that **this practice is as unsafe as housing patients in ED corridors**. The effect of this HIQA safety directive must be to outlaw this and similar practices countrywide.

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, MRCP, 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