



Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

123 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2
Ireland

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IAEM rejects HSE spin that cutbacks will “not impact on patient care”

Significant cutbacks have been made in many of Ireland's acute hospitals over the last three weeks and more are planned. A number of hospitals have already introduced ward closures and curbs on elective and planned activities. There have also been lay-offs of frontline medical and nursing staff, including Temporary Hospital Consultants, as well as those ancillary staff required to maintain essential services. Contrary to the assertion by HSE CEO, Prof. Drumm, on RTE radio that these cutbacks were relatively minor financial adjustments and that they should have no impact on patient care, it is inevitable that any loss of frontline staff will have direct consequences on patient care. To suggest otherwise is nonsense, given that the Health service is, by its very nature, critically dependent on the people who provide the services patients need.

As the safety net of the hospital system it is inevitable that additional pressures will be felt in Emergency Departments (EDs) around the country. Any loss of beds or restriction of essential frontline services inevitably results in patients being forced to attend EDs when alternative options cease to be available. **At a time when the HSE should be actively moving towards a target that any patient who attends an ED will have been seen and either admitted or discharged within 6 hours of arrival, the reality of these cutbacks is that the current unsatisfactory experience for patients who are forced to wait, for prolonged periods of time for hospital admission, is inevitably going to worsen.**

What outcome measures will be used by the HSE to monitor and manage the effects of the cutbacks? The IAEM calls for honesty from senior HSE Managers so that the effects on the public are made known. It is up to HSE management to show that Prof Drumm can deliver on his promise that there will be no impact on patient care as a result of these cutbacks.

President:

Mr. Fergal Hickey FRCS, FRCSEd. (A&E), 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. James Binchy FRCSEd. (A&E), Dip.Med.Tox., FCEM.
Consultant in Emergency Medicine,

University College Hospital
Newcastle Road,
Galway,
Ireland

Tel No: +353 91 542 766
Fax No: +353 91 520 154

Treasurer:

Dr. Una Geary FRCSEd. (A&E), FRCPI, FCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

St. James' Hospital
James' Street
Dublin 8
Ireland

Tel No: +353 1 4103581 / 4162777
Fax No: +353 1 4103451