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IAEM requires action on the implementation of the *Emergency Department Task Force Report*

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine notes that over a month has passed since the much-delayed publication of the Emergency Department (ED) Task Force report. Among the report's many findings was that:

- Seven EDs were unfit for purpose
- Most EDs had inadequate physical infrastructure
- The key causes of delays in EDs are due to inadequacies in hospital and community services

Among the Report's recommendations was that:

- The health system adopts a culture of '*zero tolerance*' for trolley waits
- A 6-hour total wait time from arrival to discharge/admission represented a realistic operational target for the HSE and hospitals
- By 1st February 2007, the HSE should have set a date from which hospitals will meet a performance target of 6-hours or less wait time **from decision to admit**. (It is accepted in the report that this time is inaccurate and subject to gaming).
- By 1st February 2007, the HSE should have determined a timeframe from which a total maximum wait of 6 hours from **arrival** at the Emergency Department to admission or discharge will apply.

To date there has been little debate about the findings of the report and certainly no action on its recommendations. The decision of the HSE to publish it (and a second report on Acute Bed Use) on the Friday afternoon of a Bank Holiday weekend may have resulted in a lack of significant uptake by the media. However, despite the impression consistently given by the HSE, the initial improvements seen in some EDs in the latter part of 2006 have not been maintained and, in fact, some departments have, in recent months, experienced record numbers of inpatient boarders i.e. patients lodged on ED trolleys while waiting for admission to a hospital bed.

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The IAEM calls on the HSE to stop obfuscating and immediately implement the recommendations of the report. In the first instance, it calls on the HSE to immediately apply the performance target of **having all patients requiring admission accommodated in a hospital in-patient bed 6 hours or less from the time of decision to admit**. At the same time the HSE must announce a time frame for the introduction of the definitive performance target of **a total maximum wait time of six hours from arrival in the ED to admission or discharge**.

While the IAEM remains fully committed to working with the HSE to achieve the 6-hour total time target it will not be party to irrelevant, cosmetic or meaningless targets that do not reflect a real and sustained improvement in the experience of patients attending the country's EDs. The IAEM calls on the HSE and DoHC to provide the resources necessary to make this the standard of care for every patient attending an Emergency Department by the end of 2007.

The recent comments made in the Dail by the Minister for Health & Children, Ms Mary Harney TD, to the effect of condoning the waits on trolleys endured by many patients is of very serious concern to the Association. The '*zero tolerance*' policy for trolley waits proposed by the Task Force for the entire Health Service must begin with the Minister!