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**Response of IAEM to RTE Prime Time Investigates programme
on Emergency Departments 15th May 2006**

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine cannot and does not condone the use of hidden cameras to record footage of vulnerable, often elderly patients waiting in Emergency Departments for admission to a hospital bed. We are fundamentally of the view that this practice infringes a patient's right to privacy and compounds the already grossly unsatisfactory arrangements that apply as they await an appropriate hospital bed. Notwithstanding our concerns about these ethical issues the programme has served to graphically highlight to the public just how unsatisfactory the conditions for both patients and staff actually are. The IAEM regrets that it has taken a programme such as this to bring the matter squarely to the notice of the general public in spite of the Association's attempts over a prolonged period to highlight the unsatisfactory situation foisted on so many Emergency Departments across the country.

The programme supports the IAEM view that:

- The situation is intolerable and must be rapidly and comprehensively resolved
- The HSE and the DOHC must immediately adopt a culture of zero tolerance for trolley waits in Emergency Departments
- CEOs/ General Managers must be held accountable for patients who are left waiting in Emergency Departments for hospital beds
- The continuing overcrowding in Emergency Departments poses a significant health risk to patients as Emergency Departments are not intended or resourced to look after inpatients
- While Emergency Departments continue to accommodate inpatients there will be significant delays in the assessment and treatment of all patients attending Emergency Departments
- The continuing housing of inpatients on trolleys in Emergency Departments is an affront to their basic human rights and human dignity
- The root causes of the problems lie primarily outside the Emergency Department and are due a lack of hospital beds for those patients who require admission to hospital.

Footnote:

Despite the Tanaiste's claim that there were only 13 patients waiting more than 24 hours in Emergency Departments yesterday evening, at 8am this morning there were 209 patients waiting overnight in Emergency Departments for an inpatient bed.

16th May 2006