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IAEM Response to development of Urgent Care Centres

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) has noted the recent development of Urgent Care Centres and Minor Injuries Units in the Dublin area. These units, provided they are properly staffed and resourced (see position paper), provide a convenient clinical service for a selected group of patients. However the Association is concerned that there is a belief in certain sectors of the Health Service administration that these facilities will have a positive impact on the current "A&E crisis". The international evidence shows conclusively that Urgent Care Centres and Minor Injuries Unit make no contribution to reducing Emergency Department overcrowding and in particular the problem of *inpatient boarders* i.e. patients whose Emergency Department care is complete but require admission to a hospital bed.

While such developments avail of tax breaks they consume public funds. The population as a whole would be better served if these funds were invested in the development of appropriate facilities and resources to allow public Emergency Departments the opportunity to treat all patients in a timely and appropriate fashion.

However as these units become a reality it is imperative they operate to the highest clinical standards. Therefore the IAEM, as the representative association for Emergency Medicine in Ireland, feels it necessary to recommend minimum standards for these units.

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