

10th May 2011

IAEM welcomes decision to properly count numbers on Trolleys

For many years the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine has consistently argued that figures used by the HSE, purporting to represent the number of patients waiting in Emergency Departments for the provision of a hospital bed (Inpatient Boarders), grossly under-represented the extent of the problem. Individual hospital practices and centrally determined or locally applied “clinical exceptions” resulted in systematic under-reporting of the true extent of the problem. The Association therefore welcomes the decision by the Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly TD, to implement a simple mechanism of counting Inpatient Boarders which will truly reflect the reality of the situation. The Minister’s announcement, at the Annual Delegate Conference of the INMO on 6th May 2011, means that the Consultants in Emergency Medicine, Emergency Nurses, hospital management and the HSE will work with an agreed measure of ED overcrowding. The [Emergency Department Taskforce Report’s](#) definition of an Inpatient Boarder is to be used i.e. it includes any patient remaining in an ED after the decision to admit which is the time a patient is referred to an inpatient team for admission. IAEM welcomes the Minister’s confirmation that, in addition to the daily trolley wait count, the 6-hour Total ED Time Target is to become the primary measure of admission delays for ED patients.

It is obvious that a prerequisite to solving any problem is to recognise the problem and the full extent of it. Now that the Inpatient Boarder numbers will be calculated accurately, focus must move to the resolution of this problem which has bedevilled Irish EDs for well over a decade. It is imperative that the various initiatives being developed by the HSE Directorate of Clinical Strategy and Programmes, all of which impact on Emergency Medicine and the ability of EDs to secure beds for their patients in a timely fashion, are implemented without delay. Success in managing ED overcrowding will be indicated by Inpatient Boarder counts of zero and by all patients being admitted or discharged within 6 hours of ED arrival.

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