

**Press release from the  
Irish Association for Emergency Medicine  
29<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) is delighted that the Minister and the HSE are giving the Emergency Department (A&E) overcrowding issue the priority it deserves.

The Minister has stated that it is not acceptable to the public, not acceptable to her and not acceptable to the HSE that anyone should sleep overnight on a trolley in a corridor.

All those working in Emergency Departments (EDs) have consistently maintained that that this practice is totally unacceptable. We agree that it is vital that patients' dignity and privacy should be respected at all times.

We welcome any new resources that are targeted towards solving this issue. The Minister has made many promises on which we hope she will deliver. However the availability of some of these resources, such as extended hours diagnostics, will be dependent on changes in work practices in health care groups outside Emergency Departments. A change in these practices will require immediate negotiation with these groups to ensure that the promised resources are mobilised quickly.

There is talk of early discharge and moving patients out of hospitals. However this is dependent on setting up adequate community services. Again these need to be resourced and take time to set up.

The HSE is looking for an extra 250 beds in the private sector to accommodate the needs of delayed discharge patients. While this is welcome it is only a partial solution to the problem, as it amounts to an increased capacity of fifty acute admissions a day assuming a five day length of stay. Currently there are often between 350 and 450 inpatients lodged in Emergency Departments at night.

IAEM seeks clarification on the Minister's suggestion that extra beds will be assigned to "A&E areas". Currently most Emergency Departments do not have beds and putting patients into beds within Emergency Departments will only worsen the situation. We assume that the Minister was referring to more beds for admission units.

IAEM welcomes the introduction of some performance targets. However we believe that it is wholly unacceptable, even in the short term, to accept that up to ten patients in each ED can wait for up to 24 hours before being moved to a ward.

We are delighted that this issue has now been declared a national emergency and we look forward to working with the HSE and the Minister in order to improve the quality of care for patients who attend Emergency Departments.