

17th November 2015

IAEM further responds to ongoing Tallaght ED overcrowding controversy

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine [welcomes the decision by Tallaght Hospital to address concerns raised by Dr Jean O'Sullivan](#) regarding her treatment by hospital management following her attempts to advocate on behalf of patients forced to wait on trolleys in its Emergency Department (ED) for a hospital bed. The recent well-publicised story of one particular patient triggered media and political interest and in the course of this narrative, a number of threads have emerged which require comment:

1. Detention of admitted patients on trolleys in EDs is unacceptable and poses significant clinical risk. This risk is greatly increased if the victims of this practice are elderly or have coexisting medical conditions. The event which prompted this controversy is therefore unacceptable and should not have been allowed to happen.
2. Although the case that triggered this recent interest arose at Tallaght, this is a countrywide problem. The daily experience of Consultants in Emergency Medicine around the country is that this problem is ubiquitous and worsening and many felt it necessary to describe their personal experiences of the problem. The Association supports them in ensuring that they meet their professional obligations to advocate on behalf of their patients.
3. EDs cannot function both as Emergency Departments and warehouses for admitted patients while they await hospital beds. The function of the ED is to provide emergency care and identify those patients who require hospital admission. Responsibility for their clinical care then passes to the relevant inpatient team. The [unsympathetic and unsupportive response by other Consultants in Tallaght Hospital](#) seems to indicate they miss the point that they too have a professional responsibility to advocate on behalf of these admitted patients who are under their care.

The practice of boarding inpatients in the ED is unsafe and must stop. Trying to silence the messenger rather than deal with the problem is of no service to our patients who require emergency care in ever increasing numbers.