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IAEM slams official responses to worsening Emergency Department crowding crisis

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine is deeply disappointed with the anaemic official response to the worsening Emergency Department (ED) crowding crisis that results in such negative outcomes for both individual patients and society as a whole. For the HSE and Department of Health to claim improvements in the face of very clear evidence to the contrary and to attempt to explain the problem away as if they bear no responsibility for the lack of planning and resourcing of acute hospital services to deal with the increasing number of patients presenting for acute care is both disingenuous but also reflects the inertia that pervades both organisations.

The planning and resourcing of services to meet the medical needs of the public, particularly when such needs are rising so predictably, is a matter for both the HSE and DoH and the ongoing abdication of responsibility will inevitably result in further patients dying unnecessarily as a result of ED crowding and patients having worse medical outcomes than would otherwise occur. Not alone do these inferior outcomes potentially cost the lives of our citizens, they typically result in increased medical costs because of longer lengths of hospital stay and incur the costs of dealing with the additional medical complications that would otherwise have been avoided; costs that are both immediate and longer term.

The current national political posturing that has resulted in ineffectual governance of the state for over a month now and the statements issued by both the HSE and DoH in the face of this worsening crisis will do little to reassure patients and frontline staff in Ireland's Emergency Departments that these worsening problems are ever going to be addressed by those who have the responsibility to address them. Indeed the political and management commentary on the situation in EDs is best characterised by Dr Chris Moulton, Vice President of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, with his comment "*never has some much idle twaddle been written by so many pundits about so few staff working so hard to treat so many patients*" in describing similar misguided commentary in the United Kingdom.

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