

12th October 2016

ED Crowding continues to cost lives and create misery

On the day of Budget 2017 a total of 438 patients languished on trolleys in Ireland's Acute Hospitals, 352 of these in the country's 29 Emergency Departments (EDs). Six of these hospitals had in excess of 20 patients on trolleys in their EDs with 3 of them having over 30 patients. In 2016, in a developed country that spends €14.6 billion on the Health Service this is simply unacceptable. Many of these patients are elderly. Some in their 80s and 90s have been obliged to wait far in excess of 24 hours which is even more unacceptable.

The absence of significant capital investment in the Health Service's decaying infrastructure and any real attempt to address the serious shortage of acute hospital beds is deeply disappointing. It suggests that the government is happy to lose yet more of its citizens to premature death and disability. There is clear evidence of the harm caused by ED crowding which results in an estimated 350 excess, avoidable deaths per year in Ireland as well as many more patients who have poorer medical outcomes. There is simply no excuse for this lack of action and the crass indifference to the plight of these patients.

At some point in the future it is likely that there will be a Tribunal of Inquiry into how ill, elderly and infirm patients are allowed to die unnecessarily for the want of the necessary investment. This is not due to ignorance but to a lack of political and management will to solve a problem. The solution is so obvious: more bed capacity. The extra investment announced for the health service must take account of this.

President: Mr. Mark Doyle
FRCSI, FCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine.
Waterford Regional Hospital,
Dunmore Road, Waterford, Ireland.
Tel: +353 51 842627
Fax: +353 51 848550

Secretary: Mr. Cyrus Mobed
FRCSI, DSM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine.
South Tipperary General Hospital,
Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.
Tel: +353 52 6177987
Fax: +353 52 6177149

Treasurer: Dr. David Menzies
FCEM, Dip Med Tox, DMMD, Dip IMC (RCSEd)
Consultant in Emergency Medicine.
St. Vincent's University Hospital,
Elm Park, Dublin 4, Ireland.
Tel: +353 1 2214207
Fax: +353 1 2213346