

20th September 2017

IAEM supports full enactment of the *Public Health (Alcohol) Bill* as an important first step to safer alcohol consumption practices

Those working in Emergency Departments (EDs) in Ireland witness at first hand the devastation caused to people's lives through alcohol misuse. This misuse manifests in many different ways - the vulnerable semi-conscious teenagers scraped off footpaths outside pubs and clubs; the alcohol-associated carnage on our roads and streets; the falls down stairs as the inebriated tries to find the toilet or the bed; the house fires as intoxication overwhelms the desire for sausages or the ability to safely dispose of a cigarette; the unexpected 'king' punch that results in life-changing head injury etc. For these and many other similar reasons, experts in Emergency Medicine in Ireland are shouting 'this is crazy, it has to stop'. The statistics are truly frightening: alcohol is responsible for 3 deaths each and every day in Ireland, half of all suicides, a third of all attempted suicides, two fifths of all deaths on Irish roads, a quarter of all traumatic brain injuries and it contributes in some way to a quarter of ED attendances. On any given day in Ireland many hundred hospital beds are taken up with alcohol-related illness. This contributes very significantly to the prolonged trolley waits patients requiring admission experience in EDs, particularly as Ireland's acute bed stock is so limited by OECD standards.

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill is a vital step in Ireland's attempts to curb this carnage. It sets out measures in the following areas: minimum unit pricing, strict separation of alcohol products in outlets, compulsory health-labelling on alcohol containers, restrictions on advertising and promotions and its goal is to reduce average annual consumption in Ireland from 11 to 9.1 litres per person by 2020.

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine has supported previous initiatives to lessen the burden of alcohol-related harm. We strongly urge that the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill is enacted in full and is not allowed to be neutered by the efforts of those who profit so much from the sale of alcohol.

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