

9th May 2016

Finally resolving Emergency Department crowding must be a high priority for the incoming Government and Minister

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine welcomes the formation of a Government and the new Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD. One of the Government's first and most important tasks should be the need to invest in Ireland's creaking Health Service to ensure that the "trolley crisis" which has been with us since 1997 is finally made a thing of the past. Sadly the commitments in the new Programme for Government are rather minimalist and seem to represent steps backwards rather than forwards in the attempts to solve the problem.

In June 2012 the then Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly TD, launched the [National Emergency Medicine Programme Report](#) and committed his Government to its implementation. That report set the standard that 95% of patients would be seen and either discharged home or admitted to hospital within 6 hours of their registration in an Emergency Department (ED) and 100% within 9 hours. An anaemic statement in the new Programme for Government commits the Government to increasing the number seen and discharged within the 6 hour timeframe from the current 68% to 93% **by 2021**. This represents a significant and unacceptable watering down of the current standard.

At a time when there is incontrovertible evidence of the serious deficit in bed capacity, both in acute hospitals and in the community sector, the feeble commitment to simply carrying out a 'review' of national bed capacity will provide little comfort to the 9,000 or so patients who languish on hospital trolleys each month in Ireland's EDs or those who have their elective procedures cancelled due to this self evident capacity problem.

Given the evidence that 300 – 350 patients die avoidably each year as a direct result of ED crowding, the current minimalist Programme for Government is likely to see a further 1500 – 1750 members of the community die as a result of this inertia. The [IAEM 10](#) needs to be taken on board as Ministerial and government policy and implemented now.

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