

28th January 2019

IAEM expresses serious concerns about the implications of the proposed industrial action by nursing staff

The President of the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine, Dr. Emily O'Connor, wrote on Friday last to both the General Secretary of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) and the National Director for Human Resources of the HSE, raising serious concerns about the patient safety implications of the proposed INMO industrial action.

Unlike many other hospital and community services, Emergency Departments (EDs) are places that patients attend or are brought to with life and limb threatening conditions and other medical conditions which put their long-term health at risk. The amount of planned work in the country's EDs is very small and will be cancelled in anticipation of the industrial action. On a typical day approximately 3,500 patients attend Ireland's EDs, all of which need to be prioritised and treated. If there aren't the necessary numbers of nursing staff available, patient care will inevitably be compromised. IAEM is of the view therefore that normal nursing staff levels are required to be able to deal safely with patients attending, particularly as alternative services such as Injury Units will be closed as a result of the industrial action.

IAEM is taking this step because of its genuine patient safety concerns. As an Association, we would be the first to recognise the crucially important role that ED nursing staff play in the provision of ED care, care that simply cannot be provided in their absence. We also are only too well aware of the relentless and ever increasing pressure that Irish EDs have been under for the past decade.

We earnestly hope that efforts will be re-doubled to ensure a negotiated settlement to this industrial action, however, if it takes place, our view is that it is imperative that adequate numbers of nursing staff are made available to ensure that a safe service can be provided. In addition to absolute numbers, it is as equally important that the process of patient prioritisation which is carried out by experienced ED nurses is allowed to continue without hindrance.

A copy of the letter issued by IAEM is available [here](#).

President:

Dr. C. Emily O'Connor
MRCPi, FRCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine.
Connolly Hospital,
Blanchardstown, Dublin
D15 X40D Ireland.
Tel: +353 1 646 6250
Fax: +353 1 646 6286

Secretary:

Mr. M. Ashraf Butt
FRCSI, Dip IMC (RCSEd), FRCSed (A&E), EMDM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine.
Cavan General Hospital,
Lisdarn, Cavan
H12 Y7W1 Ireland.
Tel: +353 49 437 6401
Fax: +353 49 437 6468

Treasurer:

Dr. Sinead O'Gorman
MMedSci, DCH, FRCSI, FACEM, FRCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine.
Letterkenny University Hospital,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
F91 AE82 Ireland.
Tel: +353 74 912 3744
Fax: +353 74 912 3797