

**General Manager's Office
University Hospital Galway
Newcastle Road
Galway
Tel: (091) 544200**

18th January, 2024

REF: PQ 1955/24

RE: To ask the Minister for Health what engagement he or his Department have had with University Hospital Galway in relation to the deficits identified, including relating to bed capacity and staffing in senior positions, in the HIQA inspection report dated 16 February 2023 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Catherine Connolly

Dear Deputy Connolly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you directly in the context of the request for information referenced above.

In response to your query, we can confirm the following:

An unannounced inspection was carried out at the GUH Emergency Department on 16 February 2023, the focus of which was to monitor compliance with the National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare.

The inspection focused on key issues that impact on the delivery of care in the ED including: effective management to support high-quality care, patient flow and inpatient bed capacity in the hospital, respect, dignity and privacy for people receiving care and staffing levels. The hospital was inspected on four standards and was found to be partially compliant in two areas and non-compliant in two areas. Work has progressed to address issues highlighted in the report.

We continue to work on addressing the issues highlighted and acknowledge the ongoing commitment of our ED staff who provide excellent person-centred care in a challenging physical environment.

HIQA noted a shortfall in Medical and Nursing staff which impacted on the delivery of high-quality, safe and reliable healthcare. The hospital has prioritised the recruitment of unfilled posts across all levels within the ED, using all tools both locally and internationally to recruit our full complement of staff. Additional ED

Consultants have been recruited. Two additional ED Consultants are in post (one Consultant is in post since September 2023 and one Consultant is in post since the 8th of January, 2024). A third Consultant will be in post by the 12th of February, 2024. Three more Consultants are to also be in post by July 2024. Many of the vacant nursing posts have been filled however the current moratorium on staff has delayed the fulfilment of remaining vacant nursing posts.

HIQA found that not all measures to protect service users from the risk of harm were being effectively implemented, particularly in relation to infection prevention and control measures. Cleaning was highlighted as particular risk and the hospital has moved immediately to remedy this. A Quality Improvement Plan has been created to address issues by the Services department in collaboration with the contracted cleaning service vendor, a regular programme of cleaning audits is in now place to ensure that hygiene standards are maintained.

The hospital was found to be partially-compliant with the standard for effective management arrangements and since the HIQA inspection improvements have been put in place to address this. Hospital management and ED clinicians are ensuring there is clarity and understanding of clinical leadership roles within the ED at the hospital. The Terms of Reference of the GUH Unscheduled Care Governance Group have been updated and state that this group is responsible for the oversight of GUH Unscheduled care governance and any issues where required are escalated to the Hospital Management Team.

We welcome HIQA's acknowledgement that a range of measures have been implemented in the ED to improve the flow of patients through the ED and to increase surge capacity. However, despite these efforts, over-crowding will occur where an infrastructure deficit exists. We deeply regret that privacy, dignity and confidentiality of patients accommodated on trolleys and chairs is being compromised and that the ED is not functioning as effectively as it should be.

At the heart of the issue of over-crowding is the urgent need for a new Emergency Department at UHG, this development is crucial to address current suboptimal accommodation and associated patient risk issues at the hospital.

Four urgent priority developments have been identified for UHG and need to be progressed to address the current deficient infrastructure and provide the required bed capacity for the identified demand of 222 inpatient beds and additional daycase requirements. They are;

- The Emergency Department with Women's & Children's Block
- Laboratory Replacement facilities Development
- Cancer Centre and additional beds (200 no of beds)
- Elective Hospital on the Merlin Park site

These developments are fundamental to address the demands for Galway University Hospitals in providing both secondary care for the Galway catchment population and tertiary care for the entire West / North West region.

The hospital remains committed to continuously improving patient flow with the ED, with a focus on patients over 75 years old waiting >9 hours in the ED. Additional Patient Flow Co-ordinators have been recruited and an Unscheduled Care Team is in place to drive sustained improvement in patient flow and cohorting of patients to the correct specialties/wards. The alignment of Patient Flow Coordinators to specific wards or clinical specialties enables an in depth flow improvement plans at individual ward / team level. To further improve patient flow and the safe transfer of patients within and from the hospital we have implemented a number of hospital admission avoidance pathways, including;

- Frailty at the front door initiative
- Multi-allied Response Service (MARS)
- Pathfinder – Pre-hospital rapid response service for older people

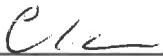
Other person-centred integrated initiatives implemented by the hospital and community to improve the experiences of older persons attending the ED included engaging with community initiatives, such as the Community Intervention Team and the Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons (ICPOP). There is also an improved focus on improving delayed transfers of care with our community colleagues, with integrated discharge round and length of stay meetings taking place regularly to review same.

A number of steps have been taken to improve patient's privacy and dignity within the current limitations of the ED. The Age Friendly Cubicles in Zone A have been recently completed. The Irish National Dementia Strategy and the Irish National Audit of Dementia Care in Acute Hospitals identified the importance of good design for supporting people with Dementia. An assessment was completed by the frailty team members, ED nursing and Medical, Alzheimer's Society representatives and the Clinical Nurse Specialist Dementia Nurse. Changes included: pictures and murals on the walls, painting of back wall of cubicles, clocks, coloured handrails / toilet seats.

In addition, the Emergency Department Transit Area is now used for patients >75 years, providing cubicle spaces and privacy while the patients await a bed at ward level. An additional Patient Advocacy Liaison Officer was recruited specifically for ED/Acute floor to further support ED patients.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Kane
General Manager
Galway University Hospitals

