



IRISH MEDICAL
ORGANISATION

Ceardchumann Dochtúirí na hÉireann

20 20 VISION FOR HEALTH

The Reality of our Health Services Today

- Over the period 2009 to 2014 **€4 billion** was taken out of the HSE budget requiring a supplementary budget of €510 million in 2014.
- Staffing levels in the HSE have fallen by **12.9%** or **14,418** Whole Time Equivalents since 2007.
- The number of acute hospital beds has fallen by **13%** or **1,631** acute beds since 2007.
- Hospitals are operating at **92.6%** capacity and ED over-crowding and waiting times for outpatient appointments have reached unacceptable levels.
- GPs are treating an additional half a million medical and GP visit card holders with funding cut by **€160 million**.
- Few primary care teams are fully operational and waiting lists apply for all allied health and social care professionals in Primary Care.
- The elderly population over **70 years** has increased by **20%** between 2006 and 2014 without an increase in required services.
- The number of home help hours has fallen by **18.5%** or **2.3 million hours** between 2008 and 2014.
- The number of long-stay beds has decreased by **2,186** or **9%** between 2008 and 2013.
- The Irish Health Services are **not an employer of choice** for Irish Trained Doctors and we are experiencing unprecedented levels of emigration amongst the medical profession.

Universal Healthcare **NOT** Universal Health Insurance

The IMO is committed to a Universal Healthcare system that aims to secure access to adequate, quality healthcare for all when they need it and at an affordable cost.

Universal Health Insurance (UHI) is a funding model that will introduce a market model of healthcare where the profit interests of private health insurers and **corporate healthcare providers will take priority over patient care.**

A funding model which relies on **mandatory private health insurance is fundamentally flawed** and cannot deliver on affordability, equity of access, choice, timely access to care or quality of care and value for money.

The IMO believes in a Universal Healthcare system where:

- All citizens have timely and equitable access to appropriate and affordable, preventive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare.
- We need to review and examine other funding models such as taxation and social insurance models.
- Universal GP services are the cornerstone of any Universal Healthcare system. GP services which are free at the point of access must be expanded on the basis of income and structured chronic disease programmes introduced.
- Until capacity in acute hospitals is addressed, Universal Healthcare implementation will not be capable of delivery.

Financial, Capacity and Manpower Planning

Health services are complex and require detailed long-term planning to run efficiently and to best serve the needs of patients. The IMO believes health requires a five year strategic plan with ring fenced resources to implement that plan.



In order to develop a credible plan for our services we need:

- A comprehensive assessment and **costing of the level of services and capacity required** across the health system including acute hospital care, GP care and ancillary professional services in Primary Care, long-term and community care services.
 - This assessment is to consider the demographic shifts expected in the future.
- A **commitment to ring fence the funding required** to meet the service, capacity and manpower requirements identified.
 - The current system of funding crisis initiatives is not sustainable or viable. Ring fenced funding will commit to ending the system whereby hospitals routinely engage in rolling theatre closures, ward closures and cancelling of elective surgery to meet budget targets.

Patient Safety and Quality of Care

Patient safety and quality of care are of paramount importance to doctors in Ireland. You can't ensure quality of care without engaging with and supporting staff.

IMO members have been increasingly concerned about the effects of successive budget cuts and reduced staffing levels on patient safety and quality of care.

It is imperative that:

- All clinical services operate with **sufficient minimum financial and manpower resources** necessary to provide safe, quality, evidence-based care.
- All healthcare facilities are adequately resourced to **meet and exceed HIQA standards of care**. Dictating standards without supporting resources to implement them is doomed to failure.
- Government **invest in Information and Communication Technology**, particularly electronic health records, to improve patient safety and eliminate duplication across services.
- Government encourage and support **innovative patient safety initiatives and reform medical negligence system**.



Putting Mental Health on a Par with Physical Health

Mental health disorders affect one in four adults in Ireland and are the leading cause of disability worldwide but less than 50% of people receive professional help and even less receive appropriate care.

Stigma and discrimination continues to pose a major barrier to help seeking. Wholly inadequate resources are allocated to mental health services and both financial and manpower resources are unevenly distributed with no relationship between population size or socio-economic need.

In order to move to a situation whereby Mental Health services operate effectively we need:

- **Investment in evidence-based programmes** to reduce stigma and raise awareness about mental health issues and suicide prevention.
- Access to publicly funded counselling and psychotherapy services on GP referral. Ensure services are in place without lengthy delays.
- Investment and development of community and specialist mental health teams.
- Transparent allocation of resources based on population need.

Health in All-Policies

Significant levels of health inequalities exist in Ireland.

A wide range of factors such as poverty, inequality, social exclusion, employment, income, education, housing conditions, transport, access to healthcare, lifestyle, stress – all impact on an individual's health and well-being.

Improving the health of all our citizens will reap long-term benefits for our country by ensuring a healthier and more productive workforce with less need for expensive health interventions and social supports.

Ireland should **commit to and resource the Goals of Healthy Ireland** – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025:

- Develop a detailed implementation plan for Healthy Ireland with appropriate multi-annual ring-fenced funding to support actions and initiatives.
- Ensure that all policy decisions across all Government Departments are subject to a health impact assessment.



A Healthcare System that Protects the Doctor-Patient Relationship

The Doctor-Patient relationship is a relationship that is based on trust. Patients trust in their doctor's professionalism and that he/she will act in their best interest without interference from commercial or political interests.

To ensure that our healthcare system protects the doctor-patient relationship:

- **Respect clinical autonomy** and ensure the doctor-patient relationship is free from interference from commercial or political interests.
- **Foster a culture of trust** in the medical profession.
- Ensure policy decisions affecting the delivery of healthcare in Ireland are evidence based and made in partnership with the medical profession.
- Ensure all policy decisions are equally supported by required resources.