

# The National Emergency Medicine Programme



EMERGENCY  
MEDICINE

**A strategy to improve safety, quality, access and value  
in Emergency Medicine in Ireland**



## EMP Newsletter 2023

Welcome to our Emergency Medicine Programme (EMP) 2023 Newsletter, where we take a look at a selection of initiatives from the Programme. As usual at this time of year, we feel the pressure of numbers of patients seeking Emergency Department (ED) care and approach the end of the year with a sense of trepidation for what the winter months will bring. At the start of the year we carried out an audit on the triage process in ED patients. The audit verified that there has been a real increase in the number of patients prioritised as Triage Category 2 in recent years. It also highlighted the need to re-focus on the timeliness of the triage process. We continue to advocate for the post-triage space for parallel assessment and care bundles and protect the triage process for “just triage”.

The work from the triage audit fed into the Hospital Escalation Framework to Support Patient Safety in Emergency Departments that has now been completed and has been signed off by the Chief Clinical Officer (CCO). This was issued to all Hospital Groups in November.

In 2023 we commenced a review of the strategy document of the EMP which was published in 2012. The strategy was the most comprehensive and ambitious plan for emergency care ever undertaken in Ireland and has been the blueprint for Emergency Medicine (EM) in Ireland since its publication. While the 2012 document will endure as a resource to provide an understanding of the scope and purpose of EM, some elements are in need of review and updating. This provides an opportunity for us to refresh, reframe and integrate the model of care into current healthcare strategy. Subject matter experts have given generously of their time to review and update the content. We are currently compiling all the submissions and will have a document for consultation in Q1 2024.

This Christmas, as always, staff in EDs and many other areas of healthcare will continue delivering healthcare to our patients 24/7/365. We hope that staff will stay safe and well as they carry out their work and get some time to enjoy the festivities. Wishing you all the Best for 2024 from the EMP.

**Gerry McCarthy, Clinical Lead, National Emergency Medicine Programme ([emp@rcsi.ie](mailto:emp@rcsi.ie))**

## The National Emergency Medicine Programme Model of Care-A Strategy to Improve safety, quality, access and value in Emergency Medicine in Ireland.

The strategy document of The National Emergency Medicine Programme (EMP) was published in 2012. All 23 chapters of the original document have been reviewed by subject matter experts in 2023. There will be two new chapters on the topics of Care of the Older Person and Sustainable/Green EM. The long term vision of organising Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) to ensure a fit-for-purpose and safe service that meets the need of the population endures. This will involve a networked approach to care. Alignment of this work and Emergency Surgery Networks and Trauma Care Networks is important to minimise the risk of fragmentation of care, with equitable regional access to local emergency services while ensuring smooth transitions of care for people with more complex needs.

The new strategy document of Emergency Medicine in Ireland will be circulated for consultation in Q1 2024.

### Activity Based Funding (ABF) for EDs

The implementation of ABF in UEC is a core requirement of Sláintecare. An essential step in achieving this is ICD 10 coding of all ED attendances (currently, only inpatient admissions are coded under HIPE). ICD 10 codes have been uploaded onto each ED instance of iPIMS in the country.

The following is the current “state of play”:

- **CUH:** Local Champion nominated.
- **UHL:** Enquiry made of PAS vendor about uploading the ICD -10-Discharge codes
- **CHI** (Tallaght Emergency Care Unit, Temple Street ED, Crumlin ED, Connolly UCC) are already coding all ED attendances.
- **IEHG, DMLHG and Saolta HG:** EDs have been requested to nominate local champions. IEHG and DMLHG attended a webinar on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

A sample implementation plan and range of training materials have been developed to support clinicians in selecting an appropriate diagnosis code for each patient they treat.

### Unscheduled Care for Older Adults: The Implementation of the Triage Changes for Older Persons

At the request of the HSE National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead for Acute Operations, EMP provided input to the 3-year Urgent and Emergency Care Plan. In that submission the EMP prioritised the care of older adults aged 75 and over and stated that good design of pathways was needed within the Emergency Department (ED) to deliver high quality, timely and efficient patient care. A multi-disciplinary Working Group was convened to provide senior clinical advice on the implementation of the proposed triage changes and post-triage care for older adults. The group, chaired by Dr Rosa McNamara, has concluded its work and the resulting paper entitled **Output of the Working Group on Triage Changes for Older Adults** was presented to the National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead for Acute Operations (NCAGL AO), Dr Michael O’Connor, and the National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead for Older Persons (NCAGL OP), Dr Emer Ahern.

National implementation of the new pathway for the care of older adults in the ED is on hold until the establishment of Local Steering Groups for the implementation of Community Health Networks. This is part of the Urgent and Emergency Care Plan for older adults. Co-operation from the wider system is an essential part

of the pathway changes. Six pilot sites are progressing with implementation of part of the pathway in ED in Q4 2023.

This project, when implemented, will result in an improved care pathway for the care of older adults in the ED. It is expected that focusing on adults who aged 75 and over will have a secondary benefit to the experience of all patients who attend the ED.

## Paediatric Emergency Medicine (PEM)

Eight posts of candidate Advanced Nurse Practitioners in PEM were approved in EDs around the country in 2023. In light of the current heterogeneity of models of service delivery of Urgent and Emergency Care to children outside of Dublin, it has been necessary to test a new model of shared clinical governance in the training of these ANPs, jointly between named consultants in Emergency Medicine and Paediatrics.

EMP in conjunction with the National Office for Trauma Services (NOTS) is seeking the appointment of Consultants in Paediatric Emergency Medicine in Emergency Departments outside of Dublin. EMP recommends that, at a minimum, each hub ED/Trauma Unit should have at least one Consultant in Paediatric Emergency Medicine to lead out on standard setting, appropriate care environments and the quality of care delivered to children presenting to EDs and associated units in the region. EMP and NOTS have written to the relevant National Clinical Advisors and Group Leads and have developed a paper on justification and details of the proposal, including its alignment with national strategies and requirements.

## HSE National Clinical Audit of Emergency Department Triage

At the request of the HSE Chief Clinical Officer (CCO), the National Emergency Medicine Programme (EMP) and the National Centre for Clinical Audit (NCCA) brought forward a plan earlier this year for a HSE **National Clinical Audit of Emergency Department Triage**.

The *HSE National Clinical Audit of Emergency Department Triage Steering Group* was established in January 2023 to provide governance and oversight of the audit. A multidisciplinary project team, sponsored by the HSE CCO and led by the EMP Clinical Lead, was established to support the Steering Group and provide operational support with all stages of the clinical audit. The project team included the RCSI Data Science Centre.

The aim of the HSE National Clinical Audit of Emergency Department Triage was to determine the timeliness, completeness and accuracy of the Triage Category assignation for patients who attend EDs.

The audit verified that there has been a real increase in the number of patients prioritised as Triage Category 2, rather than a misapplication of triage. The HSE CCO communicated with Hospital Groups about the need to examine the timeliness of these patients being seen, bearing in mind that after triage the time to clinical assessment should be 10 minutes for these patients. This project and results were presented at the Advanced Life Support Group/Manchester Triage System Conference on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

The audit found that 81% of patients had the correct triage category assigned and 93% of patient had the correct presentational flowchart used. Also of interest from the audit was the wide variation in timely triage (i.e. within 15 minutes) during daytime hours, with overall timely triage ranging from 21% to 76%.

The audit report was issued individually to all EDs with feedback and advice and is available to view [here](#).

## Hospital Escalation Framework to Support Patient Safety in Emergency Departments

The results of the National Clinical Audit of Emergency Department Triage fed into the **Hospital Escalation Framework to Support Patient Safety in Emergency Departments** that has now been completed, signed off by the CCO and circulated to hospitals.

The proposed recommendations include the establishment of a local Escalation Governance Group of relevant stakeholders to collectively agree a Local Escalation Framework Policy, in recognition of specific triggers, such as increasing ED waiting times and long waits for inpatient beds, formal recognition and development of the Post-Triage Phase of Care and implementation of [EMEWS](#) (Emergency Medicine Early Warning System).

### Key Variables in determining ED attendance

EMP was asked by the CCO to consider how Hospital Groups might use the “[Better data, better planning](#)” research that was published in 2022.

From this work, EMP concluded that the key variables in determining ED attendance are:

- Age
- Socioeconomic status
- Ease of access to GP
- Public awareness of Injury Units and Alternative Care Pathways (including Injury Units)
- Accessibility of Diagnostic services and other health services

Other considerations may include cultural diversity and populations with special health requirements.

Research summary slides are available for anyone interested by contacting [emp@rcsi.ie](mailto:emp@rcsi.ie)

### Emergency Medicine Early Warning System

The [Emergency Medicine Early Warning System](#) (EMEWS) eLearning module was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Irish Association of Emergency Medicine. The module is available on HSE LanD in the Clinical Skills catalogue. It is recommended that all clinical staff in the Emergency department undertake the module.

## Emergency Medicine Airway Registry Ireland (EMARI)

NOCA have offered to produce an audit development report based on existing data located on the REDCAP database held in UL since 2020. The report will analyse the data, interpret the results, compare the findings with existing literature and studies related to emergency airway management and provide recommendations for improving emergency airway management practices based on the results.

Next steps include funding for the adoption of the Emergency Medicine Airway Registry Ireland (EMARI) as a national audit. The EMP, RCSI Dept Surgical Affairs and NOCA held initial discussions in this regard.

## Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV)

A screening support decision tool for identifying Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) in the Emergency Department) was developed as a collaboration between EMP, the Mercy University and Connolly Emergency Departments. (The screening tool can be accessed [here.](#)) A National Training Programme in relation to appropriate responses for patients, who indicate they are experiencing some element of DSGBV, even when that is not the reason for their ED attendance, is in development.

This eLearning module is aimed at all HSE staff and staff from funded services. It features information about DSGBV in all its forms, its prevalence and impacts on specific communities, as well as providing information about the national policy context and relevant legislation.

You can access the module here – [HSE Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence \(DSGBV\) Training Module 1 - Awareness](#). You can also find it by using the “search a module” tool with the key word “DSGBV”.

## Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist working in Advanced Practice Emergency / Acute injuries

EMP continues to advocate for the recognition of this role as part of the multidisciplinary team, particularly to benefit patients with acute soft tissue and musculoskeletal issues as autonomous senior clinical decision makers in Networks of Emergency Care.

## Transfer of Ambulance Borne Patients to Injury Units.

A pilot has commenced with two Injury Units (IU) exploring the safety of the model of appropriate ambulance borne patients being transported to the IU if:

- The patient meets the agreed clinical criteria
- The patient has been accepted via telephone call between National Ambulance Service (NAS) and IU practitioners

This pilot is aimed at supporting:

- The “treating the patient closer to home” initiative of the Sláintecare implementation plan
- The implementation of recommendations in the Trauma System for Ireland report
- Keeping NAS ambulance resources in local areas
- Reduction in Emergency Departments attendances

## Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs)

Emergency Departments and Injury Units have seen an increase in the number of ANP posts this year. This has progressed from 144 ANPs in 2022 to 206 ANPs in 2023. There has also been the introduction of new roles such as paediatric ANPs who will treat children with medical conditions and trauma/resuscitation roles. Expansion of scope and practice areas of ANPs now includes adults/children with musculoskeletal injuries and complaints, chest pain, “majors”, ambulatory care (Rapid Assessment and Treatment (RAT)), frailty, trauma including trauma psychiatry. Several ANPs are in the process of or have completed their PhD studies this year and a few have taken up roles in universities in Cork, Dublin and Galway. It is hoped that future bonds may be developed for joint research projects.

## The Annual Scientific Meeting of the Irish Association of Emergency Medicine 2023

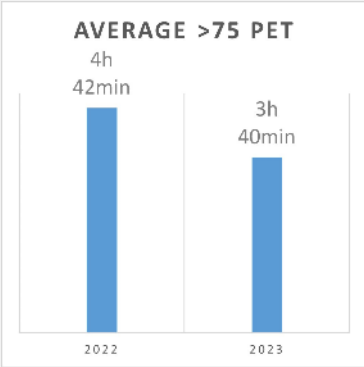


consultant posts are developed, approved and funded.

This year's Irish Association for Emergency Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) took place in Athlone on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> – Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023. It was hosted by Emergency Medicine teams from the Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore (MRHT), Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar (MRHM) and Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise (MRHP) and set a new record for the number of delegates who came from all over the island of Ireland. Gerry McCarthy gave the Leo Vella Lectures speaking about how funding of a health system is decided and allocated and how

The Valerie Small Bursary for 'Excellence in Emergency Nursing' was awarded to Marie Reid, Rapid Assessment Treatment Nurse in Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore (MRHT). Marie won her award following her presentation titled 'Many hours lived-fewer hours waited'. The findings from this audit demonstrated how Rapid Assessment Treatment (RAT) has made a positive impact on elderly patient's experiences in the Emergency Department in Midlands Regional Hospital Tullamore .





Marie concluded that “by promptly evaluating and managing elderly patients with acute conditions, RAT has demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing ED efficiency and patient outcomes. Through early initiation of investigations, prompt referrals to specialized teams like Rapid Access Frailty Team (RAFT) and Acute Medical Assessment Unit (AMAU), and identifying signs of functional decline or cognitive impairment; nursing care in RAT is invaluable. The success of RAT in the care of elderly patients highlights the requirement to address the unique healthcare needs and vulnerabilities of this population in the ED. By reducing waiting times, RAT not only improves patient satisfaction but also mitigates risks associated with prolonged ED stays such as falls, functional decline, and delirium.”

### The new Children’s ED in Cork University Hospital

Congratulations to Cork University Hospital on the opening of the new Children’s Emergency Department on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023. This new facility, includes two procedure rooms and an outdoor play space and will create a child-centred environment that is audio-visually separated from adults. Dr Rory O’Brien, Consultant in Paediatric Emergency Medicine, who led the development of the new Children’s ED said that the new calmer, child-friendly environment is now a space befitting of the vision for CUH Children’s ED to become a paediatric emergency centre of excellence.



## National Clinical Programmes Charter Day - Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in RCSI

[RCSI Charter Week](#) will take place from 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The focus of the Charter Day event is to promote new quality improvement initiatives and support healthcare quality improvement in Emergency Medicine, Surgery and Trauma & Orthopaedics. The Clinical Programmes Day on Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February is free to attend ([registration here](#)) and will include sessions on the networking of Emergency Care, Surgical Hubs and updates on the progress of the Health Performance Visualisation Platform.

### Documents and Resources:

- National Clinical Audit of Emergency Department Triage Report 2023  
[https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/HSE\\_National\\_Clinical\\_Audit\\_of\\_ED\\_Triage\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/HSE_National_Clinical_Audit_of_ED_Triage_Report_Final.pdf)
- Screening tool for identifying Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) in the Emergency Department  
<https://emnow.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/EMP-DSGBV-Poster-v3-ac2.pdf>
- A draft guideline for the assessment and management of adult patients with **suspected or confirmed eating disorders** in the emergency department has been developed and published by Aileen McCabe in Tallaght University Hospital  
<https://iaem.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Eating-disorders-in-the-ED-V1.0.pdf>

All EMP Documents and Resources can be accessed on EMNOW.

<https://emnow.ie/wordpress/home-page/emp/>

If you have any feedback or require any information please email [emp@rcsi.ie](mailto:emp@rcsi.ie)

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