Essential facts regarding A&E Services

Last winter saw unprecedented pressures on A&E departments. Media interest was considerable and many people and organisations were asked to account for these pressures. As the new Northern Ireland Executive is in the process of being formed, it is timely to provide all interested and concerned parties with a summary of the key data that should inform any responsible debate about the performance of A&E departments in the province.

**Patients**

1. Type 1 A&E attendances have risen from 544,265 in 2010/11 to 612,996 in 2014/15. When all types of A&Es are included attendances rose from 731,009 in 2010/11 to 738,665 in 2014/15.

2. In 2013/14 the total cost of these A&E attendances to the Northern Ireland Health Service was £109.35 million.

3. The UK has the 3rd lowest A&E attendance rate of 11 comparable nations.

4. Type 1 A&E attendances have increased by an average of 2.53% each year since 2010/11. If this trend continues there will be 694,564 Type 1 A&E attendances by 2019/20. This will be 81,568 more than in 2014/15.

5. During 2014/15, emergency care attendances per 1,000-population in Northern Ireland ranged from 209 to 526. In England Attendances range from 166 per 1000 population to 355 per 1000 per year.

6. From 2004 to 2014 the total population of Northern Ireland that was 65 and over went from 232,000 to 286,000. This equates to an increase of 23% in a decade. The overall population of Northern Ireland has gone up by 7% in the same period. People over 65 are more likely to present at A&E and be admitted to hospital.

7. Northern Ireland, unlike other parts of the UK, does not have an NHS111 service, walk in centres or urgent care centres. There has been a reduction in the number of minor injury units over the past five years. A minority of departments have a co-located primary care service.

**Departments**

8. There are 10 Type 1 Emergency Departments in Northern Ireland.

9. In 2015 annual attendances per department ranged from 5,205 to 92,259 (Ulster)
Staff

10. Only two of Northern Ireland’s 10 Level 1 Emergency Departments have the RCEM minimum of 10 Consultants in post.

11. It takes a minimum of eight years from commencing a medical degree to becoming an emergency medicine registrar and 13 years to become a consultant.

12. ‘Out of Hours’ working is currently recognised by paying doctors the same sum for working 1am to 4am on a Sunday night as they receive for working 1pm to 5pm on a Wednesday.

13. Figures from the UK Pay Review Body show that between 2010/11 and 2014/15 total NHS Spending on Agency and Locum staff increased from £43,037,000 to £76,508,000. Of this, spending on Medical and Dental staff increased from £23,645,000 to £38,507,000 and spending on Nursing and Midwifery staff increased from £9,917,000 to £12,094,000.

14. Over 500 UK trained EM doctors are working in Australia – 92% do not plan to return.

Flow

15. The UK has the best A&E performance in the world. However, A&E performance in Northern Ireland is the worst of all the UK nations.

16. Since 2010 the percentage of patients treated within four hours was 82%. This declined to 77.5% in 2015.

17. However, the percentage of patients waiting between four and 12 hours has deteriorated from 16.9% to 22%.

18. Exit block occurs when patients cannot be moved in a timely manner to a ward because of a lack of available beds. Exit block causes harm and mortality – it is a hospital acquired illness.

19. Waiting for a hospital bed is the most common cause for patients waiting longer than four hours in A&E.

20. A&E departments tend to register more attendances in the summer and fewer in the winter. Most A&E attendances occur between 9am and 6pm. Monday and Sunday are the two busiest days in terms of attendance levels.

Finance

21. Block funding through the Bar finances Northern Ireland’s Emergency Departments.

22. In 2013/14, HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland spent £3.69 billion down from £3.75 billion in the previous financial year. This figure equates to around 45% of total public expenditure in Northern Ireland.
References

Patients
4. Mr John McCracken Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety 15/07/2015.

Departments

Workforce
References

Flow


Funding