

Thursday, 20 June 2024

Dear Party Leaders,

The crisis taking place in the UK's Emergency Departments is nothing short of a national scandal. In 2023, more than 1.5 million patients waited 12 hours or more, 65% of those were patients awaiting admission. Furthermore, almost a quarter of people waiting 12 hours (24.2%) went on to wait 24 hours or more, equating to almost 400,000 patients waiting for over a day in A&E.

Moreover, the burden of risk is often borne by the sickest and most vulnerable patients, namely the elderly and those waiting to be admitted into a bed. It is well evidenced that longer waits in A&E are related to avoidable deaths. In fact, 250 needless and preventable deaths are occurring each week due to delays in A&E.

It is for this reason that we are dismayed by the lack of attention being given to Emergency Care. The serious omission of any meaningful priority to address overcrowded A&Es and resulting in so called 'corridor care' is unconscionable. If these associated deaths were taking place in any other setting, they would not be tolerated, yet within any manifesto and surrounding talks regarding the NHS there appears to be a blatant disregard for patients seeking Emergency Care, and the clinicians caring for them. Any mention of the matter has been light touch and hugely disproportionate to the scale of the issue.

We acknowledge that taking a whole-system approach is paramount: no single part of the healthcare system works in isolation. Bed occupancy remains dangerously high, and more than half of patients who are ready to be discharged remain in hospital, largely down to a lack of available social care. The solutions to the issues that coalesce within Emergency Departments mostly lie outside its walls, however Emergency Medicine clinicians and patients are left shouldering the concentration of the risk.

This week alone, 87% of Emergency Departments which responded to a snap poll said they had patients being cared for in non-designated areas such as corridors. Of these departments, one out of every five people who visited the A&E ended up being treated in a corridor on a chair or on a trolley. Furthermore, 68.3% of departments had patients being cared for in the back of an ambulance outside of the ED. And shockingly, 90.5% of A&E leaders who responded said that they believed that, at present, patients were coming to harm due to the care they are able to deliver within the constraints of an overcrowded department. This is inhuman and wholly inappropriate.

We strongly encourage the next government, whoever they might be, to explicitly commit to resuscitating emergency care, for both the staff that work tirelessly to provide the safest care they can, and patients, and put an end to long waits and overcrowding in A&Es once and for all.

We are eager to work together to prevent more patients coming to unnecessary harm.

Yours sincerely,



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