

# Pandemic Not to Blame for Waiting Lists

The Irish Hospital Consultants Association (IHCA) has called for Government and the HSE to expedite the publication of plans to tackle Ireland's escalating acute hospital waiting lists.

The call came ahead of the latest National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) hospital waiting lists which are expected soon, following a 2-month delay due to the cyber-attack impacting reporting.

Consultant Histopathologist and IHCA Vice President, Professor Rob Landers, said that waiting lists have been deteriorating progressively over the past decade - despite HSE claims that the service was resourced to bring these lists down before the Covid-19 pandemic struck.

According to the latest available information online (from May 2021), there were over 885,000 people on some form of NTPF waiting list to be treated or seen by a consultant.

The number of people waiting for inpatient and day-case hospital treatment has grown by more than 31,000 in the past decade - an increase of 69%.

More worryingly, in May 2021 there were 20,820 patients on these lists waiting longer than a year for hospital care; which the IHCA says is more than a 100-fold increase in such 'long waiters' since May 2012 - when there were just 199 patients waiting longer than 12 months for treatment. In addition, over the past seven years due to insufficient consultant staffing and vacancies, a further 286,000 people are

Consultant Histopathologist  
and IHCA Vice President,  
Professor Rob Landers



waiting on public hospital outpatient lists to be assessed by a consultant, an increase of 84%.

Consultants now fear that the next NTPF figures, expected to be published this month, could show significant increases across all waiting lists - anticipating the overall number of people waiting to be around 900,000 - taking Ireland's health system 'over the cliff edge' and tumbling into another healthcare crisis.

Commenting further on the waiting lists in a video released today, Prof. Landers said, "Over the last decade, the situation has progressively deteriorated to a point where we are now in an absolute crisis. The Government and health service must stop hiding behind the pandemic and cyberattack as the main reasons for our growing waiting lists."

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Within his own speciality of Histopathology, Prof Landers said that long wait times are nothing new. He noted that patients have been presenting with more advanced symptoms for the past number of years, which is a particular concern for those who come in for cancer

resections (removal of tumours) at a later stage of progression of the disease.

Growing waiting lists are not simply a result of Covid-19 but demonstrate the impact of years of consultant shortages and underinvestment in capacity across public hospitals.

## Early bird registration before 1 December 2021! Abstract/GPI submission are open!

It is a great pleasure that hospital pharmacists across Ireland are now invited to the 2022 European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) Annual Congress. While these unprecedented times have turned all healthcare professionals worlds upside down, the pharmacy profession has prevailed and hospital pharmacists have never ceased to proactively adapt to a changing world in order to continuously serve their patients best interests. Fortunately, EAHP has proved to be resilient during this period and continued to work hard for the upcoming EAHP 2022 Congress undaunted by the challenges the Association has had to face. "We are very much looking forward to welcoming you in Vienna, from 23 to 25 March 2022 when spring will, hopefully, be already shining its heart-warming light on the Danube Valley," says the Association.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Live panel discussions by hospital pharmacy and healthcare experts
- Opening and Closing Ceremonies
- Social events and networking opportunities
- Access to session presentations after the Congress
- Poster Walk Sessions
- Visit the many exhibitors. Interact with them, meet the expert sessions and much more!

