



MID-WESTERN
HEALTH BOARD

3rd March 2004

To: Chairman & Each Member of
Mid-Western Health Board

Report No: 12/04
Item No 5 on Agenda

For Meeting of the Board to be held on Friday 12th March 2004

Consultant Staffing – January 2004

Dear Member,

In January of this year Comhairle na-nOspidéal issued a report on Consultant Staffing. The report sets out statistical information related to the staffing situation in Ireland.

On 1st January 2004, there were 1,824 permanent consultant posts and 4,000 NCHDs in the public sector in Ireland. There has been an increase of 93 consultant posts (5.4%) on last year. This compares with a net increase of 99 posts in 2002, 72 posts in 2001, 120 new posts in 2000 and 52 new posts in 1999.

In the years 1993 to 2003, there has been a net increase of 68% in consultant appointments in the Mid-West as opposed to a 56% increase nationally.

When the discussion document *Medical Manpower in Acute Hospitals* (Tierney Report) was published in 1993, there were 1,170 approved permanent consultant posts and 2,322 NCHDs in Ireland. The Report recommended a move from a consultant-led to a consultant-provided service. It suggested a target of 1,500 consultant posts and 1,500 NCHDs by January 2003. The projection in respect of consultant posts was in fact exceeded by 231 posts by that date. However, the project in respect of NCHDs did not materialise, on the contrary, the number of NCHDs by 1st January 2003 had in fact increased by about 70% to 3,932.

In June 2003, the Report of the National Taskforce on Medical Staffing (Hanly Report) was published and subsequently adopted as government policy. The report endorses the case for a consultant-provided service and states that this would require a substantial increase in the number of consultant posts; to 3,063 by 2009 and 3,625 by 2013 and a proportionate decrease in NCHD numbers, from 3,977 identified in June 2003 to 2,700 by 2009 and 2,200 by 2013. This amounts to a projected 100% increase in the number of consultant posts and a 45% decrease in the number of NCHDs.

There is now one consultant per 2,148 population, a decade years ago the ratio was one per 3,000. In the Mid-Western Health the ratio is one consultant per 2,807 population.

The Mid-Western Health Board had a total of 121 permanent consultant positions.

In the year 2003 a total of 106 doctors took up duty as permanent consultants in Ireland, 105 took up duty in 2002 and 108 in 2001. This compares with an average of 40 in the mid-eighties, 50 in the early nineties. An average of 106 doctors per annum have taken up duty in Ireland as permanent consultants, for the first time, over the past three years.

There has also been a change in the proportion of male and female consultants over recent years. In 2003, 62% of new consultants were male and 38% were female.

Ireland has 289 approved non-permanent consultant appointments, 198 of which were filled on 31st December 2003.

About 34% of consultants in public hospitals hold category 2 contracts, which allow for private practice off-site in private hospitals. About 66% have category 1 or geographical whole-time contracts, which confine private practice to the public hospitals in which they are employed. There are notable variations between Health Boards areas in the distribution of contract types.

There has been no significant change in the geographical distribution of the hospital workforce. The distribution of approved consultant posts and NCHD posts between the ERHA region and the rest of the country has remained constant over the past decade. In the Mid-West, 99 consultants hold Category 1 status, 19 hold Category 2 status, 2 are geographical wholetime without fees and 1 is a full-time academic.

Signed:

JOHN O'BRIEN
ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER