



## **College of Psychiatrists President: ‘Extremely worrying’ consultant resourcing crisis jeopardises junior doctor training**

- **‘Perilously low funding’ has a direct impact on doctor recruitment and retention**
- **The College of Psychiatrists’ annual NCHD Conference takes place in Dublin today (Friday)**

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023.** The President of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has said that the Government’s inability to adequately recruit and retain consultant psychiatrists is “extremely worrying” and has a serious impact on junior doctors in training.

**Dr Lorcan Martin**, a consultant in general adult psychiatry, added that current funding at many levels is “*perilously low*” and, when combined with unacceptably low staff resourcing, is failing to ensure patients are provided with the modern, fit for purpose mental health services nationwide they need.

Speaking ahead of his address to non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) in psychiatry at the College of Psychiatrists’ annual conference, which takes place in Dublin today (Friday), Dr Martin noted that the total budget for national mental health services was 5.6% of the overall health budget and current funding for training doctors to be specialists in psychiatry was at least €600,000 short of what is needed.

He said these figures were wholly inadequate to serve the needs of the some of the most vulnerable in our society who have moderate to severe mental illness. He said that there is widespread acceptance that a minimum of 10-12 % of the health budget (approximately €2.4 Billion) should be provided for mental health services.

Dr Martin added that there were only circa 500 specialist (consultant) psychiatrist posts however, only three quarters are filled on a permanent basis by specialists in Ireland when, ideally, there should be a minimum of 835 posts filled to meet growing demand.

*“At present, we do not have nearly enough doctors in psychiatry to meet patient demand. This scandalous resourcing crisis is a symptom of our difficulty in both recruiting doctors to the services and retaining those already working here. If we can put a meaningful plan in place to improve working conditions for doctors in psychiatry – specialists, trainee specialists and other NCHDs – supported with a plan to address our current perilously low funding, then an adequate number of appropriately trained professionals to resource services should follow,”* he said.

He said that the lack of specialist consultant psychiatrists has a direct negative impact on the training of NCHDs now and in to the future and could lead to significant crises such as the revelations surrounding South Kerry CAMHS. He stressed that NCHDs have a fundamental role in providing patient care in psychiatric services as they do in the health service as a whole.

He said that NCHDs needed to see demonstrable change. *“Our NCHDs are the future of our health system and are a significant priority. The College’s training programme has seen steady growth in applications from doctors in the last number of years. It is clear they want to stay and practise in Ireland, so the Government and HSE should be doing everything in its power to make that decision an easy one by providing a well-staffed, well-funded, and appropriate working environment. That is what our patients deserve.”*

*“The Government must urgently implement the national plan to ensure services have adequate numbers of consultant psychiatrists for patients, but crucially too to support and supervise trainee specialists. NCHDs need to work in a positive environment promoting best practice and innovation if we are to avoid losing another generation of doctors to emigration.”*

**Issued on behalf of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland by Gordon MRM**

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**Note:** Read Dr Martin's full address [here](#). View the full conference programme here.