



Press Statement

22nd February 2024

College of Psychiatrists President: Prolonged funding shortfall is ‘detrimental’ for Irish patients

- **Funding for doctors in training under 70% of what is needed to meet demand**
- **The College of Psychiatrists’ annual NCHD Conference takes place in Dublin today (Friday)**

Friday February 23, 2024. The President of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has said that the Government’s perennial inability to sufficiently fund psychiatric doctors in training has been and will continue to be “detrimental” for patients and has had a major knock-on effect on all mental health services in Ireland.

Dr Lorcan Martin, a consultant in general adult psychiatry, said that current funding of €1.3 million for doctors to train to be specialists in psychiatry was under 70% of what is needed to meet demand. He said that this continuous funding shortfall was a major contributor to psychiatry trainee and specialist consultant burnout, poorer patient outcomes, and significant recruitment and retention problems for mental health services.

Dr Martin noted that the College recruitment process for psychiatry training, which takes from six to eight years, indicates increasing interest and eligibility for that training. However, the additional posts and funding to reflect that interest have not been provided. The number of trainees completing the specialism each year, and the training posts currently allocated, fall far short of the HSE agreed target of 835 specialist consultant psychiatrists required by 2028.

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 said that current funding for training doctors to be specialists in psychiatry was at least €600,000 short of what is needed. He added that the current overall budget for mental health services (approximately €1.2 billion) should be doubled at a minimum, and which is in line with international norms and our own Sláintecare policy.

"Our psychiatry doctors in training are the consultants of the future and they should be given the very best chance to succeed, but instead they are facing a highly stressful and at times unsupportive working environment. At present we are underfunded, under-resourced and under-appreciated, and the net result ultimately has been detrimental for Irish patients. There are not enough psychiatrist doctors to meet demand, which makes it harder on those who do stay in this country.



College of Psychiatrists of Ireland

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“Psychiatric doctors have been asked to do more with less for years now, and even though they continually put their own welfare in jeopardy for the sake of their patients, the cracks are visible for all to see. We urgently need a revised funding and resourcing plan from the Government in order to resolve what has become an untenable situation,” he said.

He added that the foundations were in place to provide a best-in-class service for patients, noting that many of the recommendations in the Department of Health’s recent Taskforce report on NCHDs were already in place in psychiatry, including publication of statistics, a grievance policy, transparency of eligibility criteria and regionalised training schemes. The report also recommended regular training of supervisors, something that the College of Psychiatrists has been doing for many years.

Editors’ note:

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the professional and training body for psychiatrists in Ireland and represents 1,300 professional psychiatrists (both specialists and trainees) across the country. To become a specialist doctor in psychiatry (specialist consultant psychiatrist) a doctor must complete between six to seven years of the College training programme.

ENDS

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

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