College of Psychiatrists President warns that mental health funding must urgently deliver front-line staff

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- **The College of Psychiatrists' Winter Conference takes place in Naas today (Thursday) and tomorrow**

Thursday November 12, 2026.

The President of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has warned that any spending on mental health services must lead directly to approved doctor and multi-disciplinary team member posts being filled to ensure patient outcomes are not compromised.

Dr Lorcan Martin, a consultant in general adult psychiatry, will address the College of Psychiatrists' Winter Conference, which takes place in Naas today (Thursday) and tomorrow.

He said that it was imperative that national mental health budget provisions are allocated primarily for frontline staff who support some of the most vulnerable in our society, along with service improvement.

He added that all mental health specialties had been decimated by the "blunt and brutal" instruments of the HSE Pay and Numbers Strategy, which had had a significantly negative effect on patient care and doctor morale, and has worked contrary to plans to recruit staff where they are most needed.

Speaking today, he said: "The front line must be prioritised because that is where care is delivered. It is not acceptable that posts are left vacant for years on end or that it can take 12-18 months to replace a vital team member. If money must be saved, let us look towards inefficiency and if posts are to be filled let us streamline the process so that it happens promptly."

He added it was frustrating that staffing predictable vacancies – for example, because of retirements and planned leave – often was not addressed until the vacancy had occurred, leaving a gap in patient care which could have been avoided with forward planning.

“It is no comfort to a patient with crippling OCD or a life-threatening eating disorder that their psychologist might be replaced in a year’s time, or to those on an ever-lengthening waiting list that money is being saved by a locum consultant not being found.”

Dr Martin added that psychiatrists and other medical professionals across the country were being regularly subjected to threatening and abusive behaviour in person and on social media. He warned that this was having a hugely concerning effect on the wellbeing of those who are being targeted and called for urgent action to be taken to address this growing concern.

“It is not acceptable that medical professionals are being subjected to this kind of abuse. If we cannot feel safe, is it any wonder that our colleagues are burning out and that staff retention is such a problem?”

Editors’ note:

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the professional and training body for psychiatrists in Ireland and represents 1,400 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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