



IRISH SOCIETY OF PHYSICIANS
IN GERIATRIC MEDICINE

Mr Robert Watts and Bernard Gloster
Co-Chairs
Sláintecare Implementation Board
Sláintecare Management Office
Department of Health and Children
Miesian Plaza
Dublin 2

30th Nov 2023

Dear Mr Watts and Gloster

On behalf of the Irish Society of Physicians in Geriatric Medicine, representing over 140 specialists in the care of older people, we would be grateful for an update on the recommendation of the 2017 Sláintecare plan with regard to nursing home provision, and in particular:

Ending the over-reliance on market mechanisms to deliver new health care services by the expansion of public nursing homes and homecare (page 77)

We cannot see any indication of this in the Sláintecare Implementation reports to date, and worryingly ongoing reductions in HSE nursing home places. T

his is particular pressing concern in relation to the existing problems in developing consistent and robust clinical governance in nursing homes, as brutally exposed by the exceptionally high death rate in Irish nursing homes compared to other European countries during the COVID pandemicⁱ. Establishing effective clinical governance is particularly problematic in a service contracted out to private providers, and of major concern several studies from Canadaⁱⁱ, Spainⁱⁱⁱ and international reviews^{iv} indicating higher deaths in private nursing homes compared to public nursing homes.

We consider it a matter of some significant urgency, particularly in the light of the failure to implement the recommendations of the 2020 COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Report on medical governance in nursing homes, an issue perhaps best developed in the setting of publicly-owned facilities under the governance of the HSE.

Yours sincerely

Prof Desmond O'Neill MD FRCPI, Chair, ISPGM

cc: Ministers Stephen Donnelly and Mary Butler, Department of Health

ⁱ Aalto UL, et al. COVID-19 pandemic and mortality in nursing homes across USA and Europe up to October 2021. *Eur Geriatr Med.* 2022 Jun;13(3):705-709

ⁱⁱ Pue K, et al. Does the Profit Motive Matter? COVID-19 Prevention and Management in Ontario Long-Term-Care Homes. *Can Public Policy.* 2021 Sep 1;47(3):421-438

ⁱⁱⁱ Zunzunegui MV, et al. The Impact of Long-Term Care Home Ownership and Administration Type on All-Cause Mortality from March to April 2020 in Madrid, Spain. *Epidemiologia (Basel).* 2022 Jun 23;3(3):323-336.

^{iv} Bach-Mortensen AM, et al. A systematic review of the associations between care home ownership and COVID-19 outbreaks, infections and mortality. *Nat Aging.* 2021 Oct;1(10):948-961.