

Leading Change in Challenging Times

The Health Management Institute of Ireland (HMI) held their inaugural annual conference in Dublin on 3 October 2011.

Held in the historic location of Farmleigh House (former residence of the Guinness family) in Phoenix Park, the one-day conference was opened by Minister for Health, Dr. James Reilly. The Minister stressed that regardless of the economic situation the patient should come first. He believes they are often second to processes, "You grapple daily with the challenges of delivering complex services safely and efficiently within diminishing resources. But diminishing resources don't change the central imperative of any health service. The first instruction to a doctor has historically been: 'First, do no harm.'" Dr. Reilly praised the work of the HMI in helping managers to develop high levels skills and providing continuous professional development. He stressed that "every part of the health service should be managed at a professional level by people equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills to carry out this demanding task."

Speakers were a mix of Irish and international health managers and experts. The morning session was entitled 'New Policies, New Practices'. During this session, Mr. Cathal Magee, Chief Executive Officer of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) addressed the challenge of health service reform, a huge issue in Ireland at the present moment and indeed many other European countries. Mr. Heinz Kolking, President of the EAHM spoke of European healthcare funding strategies another important topic in the current economic climate.

After lunch and a quick guided tour of the historic surroundings, the afternoon session 'The Challenge for Managers' began. This session examined the challenge facing managers in bringing about the changes required. What leadership competencies are required? What breakthrough strategies will deliver results? What strategic investments should now be planned to enable delivery of the change require?

David Fillingham, Chief Executive of AQUA (Advancing Quality Alliance), focused on the time-old question: Can we get better quality healthcare at a lower cost? Also in this session, Sue Hodgetts, Chief Executive of the Institute of Healthcare Management introduced attendees to new leadership competencies. There was time for a panel discussion at the end of each session during which there several lively debates offering health managers the opportunity to share their experiences.

(E)Hospital spoke to Mr. Richard Dooley, President of the HMI during the event. He explained the motivation behind this first annual conference, "There is recognition in the health service that we need a voice, a professional voice for managers and we need a mechanism to put this voice together. We have had the HMI in place for about 8 years. It has a threefold mission: To educate, to inform and to involve." With help from strategic partner SHRC Consulting the HMI fulfil education requirements through innovative training products and e-learning. Members are kept informed through the e-magazine Health Manager and the conference is the third step, "today's conference is about involvement, bringing managers together."

Mr. Dooley recognises that the current model of service delivery is not fit for service and reform is a necessity. He believes that management is key to successful reform, "reform has commenced but it has been haphazard in its commencement. In order to progress reform you need management and leadership calibre of the highest order to achieve that. We believe this can be done by investing in health service managers, investing in their professional development so that we can put the right management and leadership competencies in place with managers at the right level that will allow them to see through this reform."

For more information on the conference or the association, please visit: www.hmi.ie

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