

## Cath Lab Numbers Make Case



It appears we have now long since passed the point of incredulity when it comes to the issue of improved interventional cardiology services at University Hospital Waterford (UHW).

As reported in these pages and elsewhere in recent weeks, cold, statistical evidence is now firmly making the case for both a second Cath Lab at UHW, in addition to the provision of 24/7 cardiac care for the South East. The provision of enhanced, appropriately funded cardiac services for the South East region should not require another rally, even though the latest such event, which will be held on Sunday, September 23rd comes with this newspaper's fullest support.

The leaked Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS) report which re-ignited the debate last week, has underlined some facts that were already known to regional campaigners: that the number of permanent cardiac procedures at UHW (3400 last year alone) made the case for a second cath lab indisputable. Interestingly, the 'safe procedure' per cath lab threshold level established in that report by Professor Kieran Daly - 2500 - is now being wildly exceeded by the part time lab at UHW. This fact, according to Matt Shanahan of the Health Equality for the South East (HEFSE) campaign, remains completely unacknowledged by the HSE. The ACS report, he claims, "completely ignores that the annual procedures total in the single Cath Lab restricted to a 39 hour weekly service at UHW has exceeded 3000 procedures for 2016 and 2017! This ACS report also ignores the annualised activity generated by the diagnostic lab on site since October 2017. This adds another 1500 procedures to the South East centres list, thereby moving its activity level to being the second highest cath lab procedures performer in the State."

And that point is well and truly worth underlining: UHW's single cath lab, operating on a part-time basis, is outperforming other centres across the country with 24/7 capability, additional staff and two cath labs. This is fact. The truth is on our side in this debate and it is baffling to see this issue kicked down the road by successive Health Ministers, into additional and unnecessary reviews.

As the 24/7 Cardiac Cover for the South East campaign reminded us in a statement on Friday last: "You will all recall Simon Harris stated very publicly he always bases his decisions 'on expert clinical advice'. To him we now say the 'expert clinical advice' contained within the ACS Report absolutely refutes the figures in the Herity Report and we are calling on Simon Harris to make an urgent statement setting the Herity Report aside and announce that 24/7 will be implemented at UHW immediately." And so say all of us.

Retired Consultant Dr Paddy Condon described the prospect of additional cath labs being installed at St Vincent's and Tallaght Hospitals prior to the granting of a second cath lab at UHW as "appalling".

"Patients from Waterford are continuing to be transferred to Cork for treatment they ought to be receiving at UHW, and there's a concerted push to transfer more and more patients from Wexford and South Kilkenny to access Dublin-based services - the regional element of this cannot and must not be forgotten." Delivery of radiotherapy services for Waterford was a fight worth waging, albeit one which took years to resolve. We are clearly in the same boat when it comes to cardiac care. We must not give up until common sense - and health equality - finally prevails.