



More frontline hospital beds needed

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The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow says that more frontline hospital beds are needed in order to put an end to the practice of moving patients between hospital wards to make way for other patients.

The call for more beds comes after a recent survey revealed that patients “boarded” out to other wards spend longer in hospital, are more likely to be re-admitted to hospital and have higher death rates than those being looked after in an appropriate ward for their needs. The authors have stated that further analysis is required to assess the impact of variables such as age on these findings.

The policy of boarding directly reflects the progressive reduction in frontline beds over the past 15 years coupled with a rise in medical admissions. It is acknowledged that this strategy has been slowed down and indeed some 400 more beds have been made available in the past year. However, clearly the number of beds in appropriate locations is inadequate.

This issue closely relates to the unstable situation in Accident and Emergency departments where the major cause of congestion is difficulty in finding a suitable hospital location for emergency admissions. This forces staff to board out patients from their appropriate ward to make room for the new patients.

President of the Royal College, Dr Frank Dunn says, “The policy of opening mothballed wards for short periods of time is unsatisfactory as it necessitates intermittent recruitment of staff with, in some cases, a lack of familiarity with hospital procedures and protocols.”

Dr Dunn continued, “However, the opening of winter wards from, for example, October to March may have merit provided the nursing complement is appropriate and the ward has a named medical leader.”

“While maximum use of current resources is necessary, an increase in the number of frontline beds and the recruitment of staff with the expertise to optimally care for patients is needed to resolve this issue.”

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow is committed to working with the Scottish Government to eliminate the practice of boarding from the Scottish Health Service.