

ALTNAGELVIN HOSPITALS HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES TRUST

ALTNAGELVIN AREA HOSPITAL

LONDONDERRY BT47 6SB

TELEPHONE - LONDONDERRY (028) 71 345171

4 May 2006

Investing for Health Team (Tobacco Control)
Department of Health & Social Services & Public Safety
Room C4.22
Castle Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Draft Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

I write to you as Chairman of the Smoke Free Hospital Initiative Committee in Altnagelvin Health & Social Services Trust, expressing the views of that committee and also expressing the views of my colleagues and senior management within the Trust.

We have carefully considered the Draft Smoking Order and have also discussed this with representatives from the Western Health & Social Services Board. We fully support the response of the Western Health & Social Services Board (which I have attached).

There are some specific areas which I would like to stress both in my role as a Consultant Cardiologist and as the individual charged with driving through a Smoke Free Policy within this Trust:

1. Patients within the Western Health & Social Services Board have traditionally had a very high level of smoking related illnesses; this situation will only improve when a smoke free environment comes to be accepted as the norm.
2. Many patients in my practice sincerely wish to stop smoking and unfortunately many who do initially succeed in stopping relapse; it is my experience that a major barrier to stopping and a major factor in relapsing is the presence of environmental smoke particularly in social and public venues.
3. The current situation of acceptance of smoking in public venues results in many individuals disregarding no smoking signs; this occurs particularly in certain areas within the hospital, particularly at entrances. The establishment of a generalised ban of smoking in public areas will help the promotion of a truly smoke free hospital.

I am grateful for your consideration of our response; my colleagues and I regard this as essential legislation which will have enormous impact on public safety. It is my personal view that this legislation will have a much greater effect on public safety than some legislation which already exists, for example the compulsory requirement to wear seatbelts or the legality of using a mobile phone whilst driving, both very laudable pieces of legislation but ones which will have a much less dramatic impact on mortality than a ban on smoking in enclosed public places.

Yours faithfully

A J McNeill MD FRCP FRCPI FESC
Consultant Cardiologist & Chairman Smoke Free Hospital Initiative Committee

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