

19/04/2012

FAO : Cathaoirlaigh, Príomhoidí, Múinteóirí agus Cinnirí
As na gColáistí a mbíonn ag tabhairt aire do dhaltai samhraidh
Sa cheanntar ina bhfuil mise ag obair

**Change in the presumed availability of medical cover c/o myself to your students this summer.
I regret to inform you that I cannot provide twenty four hour availability to your students.**

A dhaoine uaisle,

Can I first apologise for writing this “as béarla” as my spoken Gaeilge is “gar go líofacht nádúrtha” but my written Irish is “uafásach”. I am contacting as many of the coláistí as possible, as early as possible, prior to commencement this summer’s terms.

For the last decade I have worked in Rosmuc and have attended to the sporadic illnesses that have arisen in your students whilst they have been in your care, and when you have been acting in loco parentis to them. I have done this despite never having been contacted by any college and never having been asked if it was feasible for me to provide twenty four hour availability to the students.. The presumption on my availability had become an accepted norm by your teaching staff.

Over the last number of years I have, with ever increasing frequency, been contacted later and later at night about illnesses of lessening severity and significance. It has started to impact on my ability to provide a sustained service out of hours, and during the following days to the patients that I am obligated to. It is perceived by myself, that no cognisance is given, by the coláistí, to the fact that I have to work the following day and that I have responsibilities whilst on call for close on five thousand people, many of whom are elderly and housebound.

A practice has developed where junior supervising staff (more junior than principal), contact myself at any hour about any condition about any child, without having seen the child in question themselves. The múinteoir/cinnire, have already contacted the child’s parents and asked them “do you want “Máire / Tom” seen by the doctor”.? No parent living a hundred miles away would say anything but yes to such a question. The coláistí are therefore abdicating their “loco parentis” role and transferring it to me without any filter. It is not unusual that the same parents are out of the country when I do try to contact them. The majority of these issues would not involve a trip to the doctor if these students were at home with their parents.

The transference/abdication of the parental role to me for increasingly more minor issues in your students, has resulted in it being difficult to for me to provide a sustained service to my own patients and those of my colleagues to whom I am contractually obligated to see.

I regret to inform you that I can no longer provide twenty four hour availability to your students. I have a greater local patient workload than ever before , with ever increasing complexity and, unlike most other areas in the country, I have no co-op or deputising services to relieve the burden of the onerous out of hours rota.

I do not wish to see any child wanting for care. I will therefore remind you when I am available.

I would like to remind you that my surgery hours are (by appointment) Monday to Friday (9 to 5) but with a half day on Thursday. You are welcome to make an appointment for your students to be seen during surgery hours.

On top of that I will make myself available to your college students between 8pm and 9pm each night, that I am on call for our rota

Also,

When I am on call for the weekends I will make myself available to your students on the following times.

Sat (Mornings 11-12 : Afternoons 3-4pm : Evenings 8-9pm)

Sunday (Mornings 11-12 : Afternoons 3-4pm : Evenings 8-9pm)

I will not be providing any telephone advice outside those hours. Please ask your staff not to phone me at any other time and not to seek telephone advice as I will refuse to give same and that refusal will cause offence. Telephone advice represents as much work and medicolegal exposure as a surgery based consultation.

Please put plans into place for such an eventuality - eg VHI phone line / our local A&E / paediatrics unit or consider engaging the services of a nurse on the payroll either by separate colleges or collectively. I would be grateful if you would plan for same in advance of students arriving in the area.

Yours Sincerely
Dr John McCormack
The Health Centre
Rosmuc
Galway
091 574107

dr.johnmccormack@gmail.com



In the event of a life threatening emergency (eg child knocked down by a car / convulsions / choking etc)– all of the above is negated and your staff should contact me immediately AFTER (NOT BEFORE) contacting the emergency services on 999 (or112) regardless of the time – day or night.