

LD/os

8th June 2009

Mr Eugene Donoghue,
Chief Executive Officer
An Bord Altranais
18-20 Carysford Avenue,
Blackrock
Co. Dublin.

Dear Mr. Donoghue,

I refer to your recent correspondence, dated 26th May 2009, which enclosed documents from An Bord Altranais, relevant to decision making, by nurses and midwives, during an industrial dispute.

I also wish to confirm that your correspondence, and the entirety of the attached documents, were considered, in detail, by my Executive Council at its meeting on Wednesday 3rd June.

Arising from your correspondence, and following further consideration of the attached documentation, I wish, on behalf of my Executive Council, to draw the following to your attention:

1. The Irish Nurses Organisation is satisfied that, at all times, our members, when exercising their professional judgement, whether in Sligo General Hospital or any other location, make, and made, all their decisions, and determined all their actions, fully cognisant of :
 - the best interests of their patients/clients;
 - the importance of promoting and maintaining the highest standards of quality health services; and
 - the need to act as advocates for the individual patients/client, and for his or her family, and also on behalf of nursing/midwifery within the organisational and management structures within which care is being delivered.
2. In the context of An Bord Altranais's decision to remind nurses and midwives, through various media and other outlets, of their responsibilities, when taking industrial action, and the obligations placed upon the nurse or midwife by the code for professional conduct, the INO is now seeking, by return, definitive clarification from An Bord Altranais in relation to the following;

- i. The Code of Professional Conduct for each nurse and midwife specifically states the following:

“The aim of the nursing profession is to give the highest standard of care possible to patients. Any circumstance which could place patients/clients in jeopardy or which militates against safe standards of practice should be made known to appropriate persons or authorities.”

In the context of this explicit statement, will An Bord Altranais please indicate what a nurse or midwife should do when he/she has repeatedly made known their concerns, about standards of care, to the appropriate authorities, eg, their employer, and these concerns, both verbal and in writing, have been totally ignored?

Should that individual nurse or midwife, or group of nurses and midwives, continue to work in an environment which they feel is unsafe and about which they have notified the appropriate authority?

- ii. Once again in the context of the Code of Professional Conduct for each nurse and midwife, we are seeking a definitive statement from An Bord Altranais with regard to the following:

- There are currently large numbers of nurses and midwives working in locations which, in the view of those nurses and midwives, is unsafe and which, following independent third party examination, have been found to involve high risk to patients. However, notwithstanding these two separate validations of unsatisfactory standards of care, the employers are failing, completely, to acknowledge, respect or act upon these two separate advices/findings.

What should these nurses and midwives now do in order to adhere to their Code of Professional Conduct?

Should they continue to work in a clinical environment which they have decided to be unsafe, and which has been found to present a high risk to patients by an independent third party?

3. This Organisation, again in the context of the recent public statement and actions by An Bord Altranais, is also seeking confirmation that, specifically with regard to Sligo General Hospital, An Bord Altranais has sought information, from the hospital authorities, with regard to the care environment.

We assume this is viewed as absolutely necessary in order to establish the basis of the views of the six hundred plus nurses and midwives who have, individually, collectively, and through their representative organisations, expressed concern about staffing levels in that location.

We would appreciate copies of the correspondence that, at this stage, we assume you have issued to the management in Sligo General Hospital.

Due to the urgency now surrounding the critical issues, which An Bord Altranais has highlighted in recent days, we would very much appreciate an immediate reply, to the foregoing questions, and look forward to receiving same within seven days. We will immediately advise all of our 43,000 plus members of the clarifications now awaited from An Bord Altranais.

Yours sincerely,

Liam Doran
General Secretary