**Substantial increases in clinical indemnity charges for hospital Consultants will impact adversely on the health system**

**13 June 2014**, The Irish Hospital Consultants Association (IHCA) has expressed its grave concern at the decision by the Medical Protection Society (MPS) to significantly increase its charges for clinical indemnification with effect from July. This decision by MPS means that some consultant private practices will become financially unviable and the significant rise in indemnity charges will increase the cost of providing care to patients. It is also expected that this will result in a growing number of patients seeking care in public hospitals at a time when these hospitals do not have the capacity to treat more patients due to a lack of frontline resources and an insufficient number of Consultants.

MPS, which is the main provider of clinical indemnity in Ireland, has stated that the primary reason for the increase is the growth in the cost of settling claims and the lack of progress in reforming the law relating to medical negligence claims in Ireland in contrast with other jurisdictions.

Commenting on the increase, Mr Martin Varley, Secretary General of the IHCA said: “We are extremely concerned about the implications of the significant increase in indemnity charges. These increases come on top of previous increases of between 50% and 67% since 2008, including increases of up to 33% in 2013 alone. Medical indemnification is already a considerable cost for Consultants. There is now a grave concern that the planned increases will impact adversely on the number of Consultants practising in Ireland and increase the costs of providing care to patients”.

The IHCA has written to the Minister for Health, Dr. James Reilly and the Minister for Justice, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald highlighting the need to urgently implement proposals to reduce the cost of clinical indemnity and ensure the availability of care to patients. The IHCA has proposed that Ireland needs to follow the lead of other jurisdictions by implementing specific reforms that will substantially reduce the cost of clinical indemnification and improve the capacity to provide care for patients.

The Working Group on Medical Negligence, chaired by Ms. Justice Mary Irvine, has submitted a report to the President of the High Court and Minister for Justice with recommendations for the introduction of Pre-Action Protocols, including the related draft legislation. The Working Group has also submitted an additional report on proposed Rules of Court for more intensive case management of medical negligence cases, including a requirement for the exchange of information within defined time periods, as applies in the commercial court, to reduce delays and costs. The IHCA is seeking the introduction of these changes and other reforms without delay to ensure the continued availability of care for private patients, which will otherwise become financially unviable.

**For further information contact**

Maria McGrath, FleishmanHillard, Phone +353 1 6188420 or +353 861653055 or

Martin Varley, Secretary General, IHCA, Phone +353 1 2989123