

Evening Echo

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2008

EDITION NO. 33,368

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Mallow to rally as hospital loses weekend surgical cover

'I would live longer if I lived in North'

By EDEL O'CONNELL
Health Correspondent

A CORK cystic fibrosis (CF) sufferer has said she is saddened by the knowledge that if she lived outside the Republic she could access far better care.

Pamela O'Connor, aged 24, from Gurranaברה, who has a five-year-old son, Scott, was born with the life threatening, inherited disease CF.

Almost 200 people suffer from CF in this region — yet there is no specialist unit or beds essential for managing this complex condition at Cork University Hospital. The average life expectancy for CF patients in this country is 10 years less than in Northern Ireland.

Pamela, whose 14-year-old brother Jason also suffers from the disease, also suffers from arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes and chronic sinusitis as a result. However, her main problem is cross infection as her weakened immune system means even a flu could set her on a major downward spiral.

It is therefore vital that CF sufferers are kept apart from other patients.

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Cystic Fibrosis sufferer Pamela O'Connor with her son Scott. According to Pamela if she lived outside the Republic she could access far better care.

Picture: Miki Barlok

THE town of Mallow is getting ready to fight cuts in its hospital's weekend surgical consultant cover.

By PADRAIG HOARE
In Mallow

Town councillors expressed fury at a meeting last night and agreed to seek a meeting with the Health Minister and declared that a community rally would be organised to get behind the hospital.

They claimed any cuts would adversely affect the lives of 100,000 people in north Cork.

Mallow Town Council voted unanimously — and across party lines — to vigorously oppose the recent Health Service Executive (HSE) decision not to replace an outgoing locum surgeon when his employment at the hospital ended on March 31.

The hospital was reassured until March 26 that a replacement would be provided, only to be then informed by Mr Tony Long, deputy general manager of Cork University Hospital Group of HSE hospitals, which includes Mallow, that it would not.

This means there are two surgical consultants instead of three and therefore weekend cover cannot be provided.

Patients have to be transferred to hospitals in Cork city if weekend surgery is needed.

Mallow General Hospital is an acute hospital, meaning it can give short-term treatment to patients.

Some 14,000 patients go through A&E in Mallow every year.

At a meeting of Mallow Town Council last night, councillors accused the HSE of threatening people's lives with the decision.

Sinn Féin councillor Willie O'Regan said if there were a catastrophic incident like the Buttevant train crash of 1980 then lives would be lost. The HSE should then face criminal charges, he said.

Fine Gael Cllr Noel O'Connor said it was a grave injustice and if there was no consultant surgeon on call there could be no proper A&E. A patient had to be transferred to the South Infirmery last week because the theatre was not open, he said. The same thing would happen this weekend and beyond, added Cllr O'Connor.

Labour's Cllr James Kennedy called on the entire community to come out and oppose the decision, saying it was time for the people of Mallow to rise up.

Fianna Fáil's Cllr Dan Joe Fitzgerald agreed, saying everyone's voice would mean something.

Labour Cllr David O'Callaghan said the community of Mallow needed to march down the street

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