



Statement

Anaphylaxis & fatal reactions to food.

It is reported in today's Irish Independent that 14 year old Dubliner Emma Sloan died on December 18th, minutes after suffering a fatal allergic reaction.

IFAN is shocked to learn of this tragic news and expresses sincerest sympathies to Emma's family.

Food allergy is a very common, often chronic, condition affecting around 1 in 20 children at some time in childhood. It is estimated that around 20,000 children in Ireland have a peanut allergy. Food allergy causes great anxiety and distress, with many parents living in fear that their child may have a severe or fatal allergic reaction resulting in death. There is currently a study underway involving Irish Paediatricians looking at the incidence of anaphylaxis in Ireland.

There is no cure for food allergy. Management involves identifying foods which must be avoided and managing the risk of future exposures. Diagnosis and management may be provided by health care staff with training and experience in allergy. Identification of foods causing reactions is done by careful history taking and appropriate allergy testing. Once identified the food is avoided with advice given on how to do this (reading labels and recognizing high risk situations). If someone is considered at high risk for a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis they should be prescribed an adrenaline pen and advised to carry it at all times in case of an accidental exposure. Early use of adrenaline in anaphylaxis may prevent death.

The Health Service in Ireland has not recognised allergic disease as a priority despite documented increases in these conditions (food allergy, asthma, eczema and hay fever) over the recent decades and public demand for services. At this time services for adults and children with food allergies continue to be extremely under resourced. Health care staff especially in the community, are best placed to identify, diagnose and manage cases. We need to aim to have much greater education, training and support for this in the community. Allergy aware Consultants are needed in regional units, trained, resourced and equipped to manage cases.

IFAN represents multi professional collaboration between health care staff, parents and patient advocates from all over Ireland. IFAN is a multidisciplinary professional network that aims to promote an integrated management approach offering diagnosis, management, guidance, advice and support **when** and **where** it's needed for children and families living with allergy. IFAN launched 3 key resources in 2013.

1. National best practice guidelines for:

- Diagnosing and managing food allergy in the Community and in Hospitals*
- Testing for food allergy and food intolerance*
- Cows' milk protein allergy*
- Egg allergy*
- Peanut allergy*
- Tree nut allergy.*

IFAN has developed these guidelines based on European best practice providing clear user friendly diagnostic pathways and treatment algorithms for health care professionals to recognize and manage food allergy in the community and hospitals.

2. IFAN delivered a supportive education programme to health care staff in 12 locations from September – November 2013 supported by continuous professional development credits and was free for healthcare professionals to attend.

3. Website www.ifan.ie hosts care pathways, guidelines and supportive educational materials.

IFAN's strategy meets several standards of care and policy aspirations of DOHC and HSE. It promotes evidence based optimisation of self care through adherence to medically supervised diets, it promotes access to medical care for a child as close to home as possible and it reflects the national hub and spoke model of care which is being built around the Hospital Groups model launched in May 2013 and the NPH development in St. James' due in 5-7 years.

For further information and comment please contact

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