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MINISTER SHATTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTION TO LEGISLATE FOR "OPEN DISCLOSURE" OR A "DUTY OF CANDOUR" FOR IRISH HOSPITALS

MIA was very happy to note the announcement made by the Minister for Justice, Mr Alan Shatter last Saturday, 8th February of the Government's intention to introduce legislation to compel Irish Hospitals and medical personnel to inform patients and their families of medical accidents and failures that have caused them harm, or which are responsible for the death or harm to a patient.

One of the principal founding aims of the Medical Injuries Alliance from its inception in 2011 has been that the Law should be changed to compel Hospitals and Health Care Professionals to inform patients and their families who have been injured as a result of substandard care, or a medical accident that they are aware of. For far too long, patients have remained in total ignorance of medical accidents which have harmed them and which the Hospitals and medical professionals are fully aware of, but which the patient knew nothing about. For far too long patients and their families have been caused huge additional distress and injury by a pervading culture of silence, sometimes a cover up, and a policy of "deny and defend".

A catalogue of recent cases which have come before the Courts have illustrated very clearly the additional harm that can be caused to patients and families by the culture of secrecy and cover up that is unfortunately still endemic in the Irish Health Care system. MIA has been campaigning for a change in the Law for several years now and has lobbied Politicians in the media and has organised conferences with eminent international experts on the issue. Unfortunately it has taken the excellent RTE Prime Time programme highlighting the scandalous situation in Portlaoise Hospital involving the deaths in childbirth of 4 babies to highlight the issue and bring it to prominent public attention.

The Committee and members of MIA are delighted that Minister Shatter, in conjunction with Minister Reilly, have decided to act and take this initiative which we believe is necessary to effect change for the better in this area.

Dated: 11th February 2014

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MIA is a non-profit organisation which was set up in 2011. The Alliance's objectives include access to justice for injured patients and imposing a statutory Duty of Candour on medical professionals and improving patient safety.

For further information on the Medical Injuries Alliance and to view their objectives, please visit: www.medicalinjuriesalliance.ie