



Media Analysis Case Study

of

The A&E 'Crisis'

PRII Annual Conference

April, 2005

Preface

The nations 'Health' has repeatedly been identified as one of the biggest political issues since Bertie Ahern & Mary Harney formed their current coalition in 2002. Central to this has been the situation concerning the A& E departments not least because they are at the frontline of our health service.

In March 2002 the situation came to a head when the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) organised a two-hour work stoppage of all A&E workers nationwide. This was followed by the Government setting up an A&E forum to be chaired by the Labour Relations Commission and subsequently the National Pay Agreements of 2003 included a non-strike clause by all workers included in the Pay Agreements, which effectively meant the INO could not repeat the work stoppages of 2002. Without this threat, the INO needed a new vehicle and so it turned to the media where through various campaigns it has projected the A& E crises to being the dominant media issue of the last year.

In this report MediaMarket attempt to analyse and draw conclusions from the overall media debate by carrying out a qualitative study of all press media coverage over a three-month timeframe between Jan 15, 2005 and April 15, 2005. The report among other things looks the total volume of coverage around the A&E issue, identifies who the key players are, the share of coverage they have received, the 'Impact' and 'Influence' each of the key players have been able to achieve through the media, what key messages they have focused on and their overall media performance.

Separately, MediaMarket will conduct a Campaign Evaluation report for 'TrolleyWatch' over a randomly selected three-week period from 2nd to 22nd March 2005. 'TrolleyWatch', a cornerstone of the overall campaign waged by the INO is a daily news feed by the INO to the media of the number of patients on trolleys in A&E departments around the country. The campaign evaluation report will include an analysis of the volume of coverage generated by TrolleyWatch in both print and broadcast media, the 'Impact' and

‘Influence’ of the coverage, the media value of the coverage and the total audience reach and frequency against multiple target audiences over the three week period.

This report while being factual was not commissioned by any third party and was carried out exclusively for the benefit of the delegates at the PRII conference to demonstrate the type of media analysis work typically carried out by MediaMarket.

Summary Findings

1. Health Service Executive (HSE)

Key Evaluation Metrics:

Volume of Coverage: 55,669 sq. cm

Share of Voice: 22.4%

Impact Analysis

Prime Impacts 17%

Significant Impacts 64%

Passing Impacts 19%

Influence Analysis

Positive 12%

Neutral 61%

Negative 27%

The Health Service Executive had a multitude of issues to deal with throughout the analysis period, with heaviest months in terms of volume of media coverage occurring in March and April. There were many health issues to deal with including the flu epidemic, outbreak of the winter vomiting bug and resulting health and safety inspections by HSA officers.

Major problems cropped up for HSE such as the overcharging of medical cardholders, consultants resigning, nurses striking, members of the public offering to assist health services.

In terms of HSE’s handling of these crises, they were frequently successful in disputing INO’s trolley figures and the outbreak of the winter vomiting bug was well managed with informative instructions and guidelines directed through media to the public. HSE’s announcement of a new Chief Executive also boosted influence in April. HSE also took action to counteract the health crisis including seeking private tender for nursing home beds to free up hospital beds. An €11bn spending plan was unveiled by HSE on April 7th.

However, other issues were more difficult to handle for the HSE. HSE were publicly challenged through the media by bodies such as HSA and INO. HSA's chief Executive Tom Beegan in a letter challenged Mr Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive HSE to address safety issues in A&E departments (January 19th).

The negative coverage generated from the overcharging of medical cardholders was impossible to neutralise. So too were reports of hazardous conditions in A&E wards, nurses striking, hospital wards lying vacant, and consultants resigning.

The response from the public following a Liveline special on the crisis highlighted the issue with members of the public, businesses, and other bodies offering assistance. This was embarrassing for the HSE but offers were declined for numerous reasons including safety and need for planning permission. This issue was dealt with quite well by the HSE with offers politely turned down and clear reasons given.

HSE did much to counter certain issues that were out of their hands in some respects such as flu epidemic, winter vomiting bug, misinformation from bodies such as INO.

They were not so successful in addressing truly negative coverage such as the overcharging of medical cardholders and A&E conditions. They also received much criticism in the delay in the implementation of Mary Harney's 10-point plan.

HSE need to work harder at countering truly negative coverage and also increasing the impact of their coverage. Much of the work they did in trying to counter potentially negative coverage often featured as passing or significant mentions.

2. Irish Nurses Organisation (INO)

Key Evaluation Metrics:

Volume of Coverage: 50,868 sq. cm

Share of Voice: 20.5%

Impact Analysis

Prime Impacts 27%

Significant Impacts 62%

Passing Impacts 11%

Influence Analysis

Positive 79%

Neutral 20% - Possible issue with this coverage. Re Analyse

Negative 1%

3. Irish Hospital Consultants Association (IHCA)

Key Evaluation Metrics:

Volume of Coverage: 14,285 sq. cm

Share of Voice: 5.6 %

Impact Analysis

Prime Impacts 7%

Significant Impacts 70%

Passing Impacts 23%

Influence Analysis

Positive 100%

Neutral 0%

Negative 0%

4. Irish Medical Organisation (IMO)

Key Evaluation Metrics:

Volume of Coverage: 19,061 sq. cm

Share of Voice: 7.68 %

Impact Analysis

Prime Impacts 25%

Significant Impacts 34%

Passing Impacts 40%

Influence Analysis

Positive 79%

Neutral 6%

Negative 15%

5. Mary Haney, Minister for Health

Key Evaluation Metrics:

Volume of Coverage: 85,701sq. cm

Share of Voice: 34.5%

Impact Analysis

Prime Impacts 41%

Significant Impacts 34%

Passing Impacts 25%

Influence Analysis

<i>Positive</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Neutral</i>	<i>48%</i>
<i>Negative</i>	<i>42%</i>

During the analysis period January 15th to April 15th Mary Harney was one of the main protagonists in the media coverage of the A&E crisis. This is reflected both in the high volume of coverage and in the high proportion of Prime coverage (41%). The majority of coverage centred around her proposals outlined in her 10 point plan. The plan and timeframe for its implementation was the subject of much criticism . This criticism came in the main from the Irish Nurses Organisation , supported by SIPTU , the Labour Party , other organisations representing medical professionals and from patients group such as Patients Together.

There is a large amount of negative coverage directed at Mary Harney and this is shown by the high negative influence of the coverage(42%). This figure compares to 10% positive influence. This positive influence is driven by a number of positive statements by Mary Harney on her plans to ease the crisis. The high neutral coverage (48%) is generated in the main by articles outlining the issues of overcrowding and patients on trolleys balanced by positive statements from Mary Harney on solutions.

The main peaks in coverage are outlined below:

Week Commencing 15/01

- Criticism from INO and others on overcrowding
- Mary Harneys states that there would be no resolution of crisis until autumn

Week Commencing 05/02

- Lunchtime Pickets by INO
- IMO vote for Industrial Action

Week Commencing 09/04

- Harney under fire over A&E conditions
- Continuing protests

6. Patients Together

Key Evaluation Metrics:

<i>Volume of Coverage:</i>	<i>8,344 sq. cm</i>
<i>Share of Voice:</i>	<i>3.3%</i>
<i>Impact Analysis</i>	
<i>Prime Impacts</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>Significant Impacts</i>	<i>46%</i>
<i>Passing Impacts</i>	<i>38%</i>

Influence Analysis

<i>Positive</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Neutral</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>Negative</i>	<i>0%</i>

During the analysis period January 15th to April 15th the media coverage of Patients Together is primarily on a single issue , to raise awareness of the conditions in A&E departments. Through its spokeswoman Janette Byrne the group continuously called for support of medical staffs lunchtime protests. The group also centred their efforts on attacking Mary Harney and Department of Health for their slow reaction to the crisis.

The group received 100% positive coverage. They also had quite a high proportion of Prime(17%) and Significant(46%) impacts for a group of their size.

By far the largest proportion of their coverage (11 articles) came in the week commencing 11/04 with strong coverage of their support for the lunchtime strikes by medical staff.

7. Health & Safety Authority (HSA)

Key Evaluation Metrics:

<i>Volume of Coverage:</i>	<i>14,670 sq. cm</i>
<i>Share of Voice:</i>	<i>5.9%</i>
<i>Impact Analysis</i>	
<i>Prime Impacts</i>	<i>43%</i>
<i>Significant Impacts</i>	<i>39%</i>
<i>Passing Impacts</i>	<i>17%</i>

Influence Analysis

<i>Positive</i>	<i>64%</i>
<i>Neutral</i>	<i>22%</i>
<i>Negative</i>	<i>14%</i>

The Health and Safety Authority's coverage was initially negative during the analysis period January 15th – April 15th. There was a large volume of coverage during the first week, however overall the positive coverage outweighed the negative coverage by 2:1. There were three articles on the 18th April focusing on calls from the ICHA to address the safety crisis in hospitals and the coverage was negative due to an apparent lack of response from the HSA. This trend was quickly turned on 20th April with the announcement from the HSA that it was planning safety inspections in hospital A&E departments.

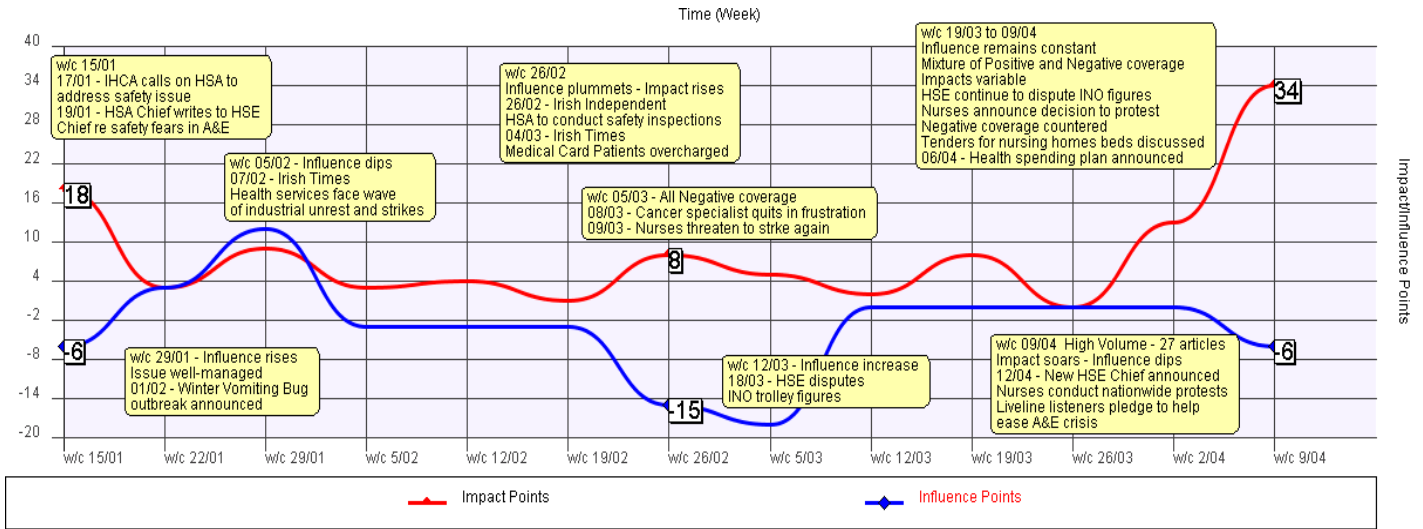
There was very little coverage during the weeks that followed until the week starting 25th February. Tensions were reported between the HSE and the HSA

with hospital chiefs disputing that they were to provide safety audits and risk assessment reports by 25th February. The HSA announcement of the new health and safety inspection team set up and that inspections were to begin on the 7th March generated a lot of interested. Coverage during this period was positive or neutral.

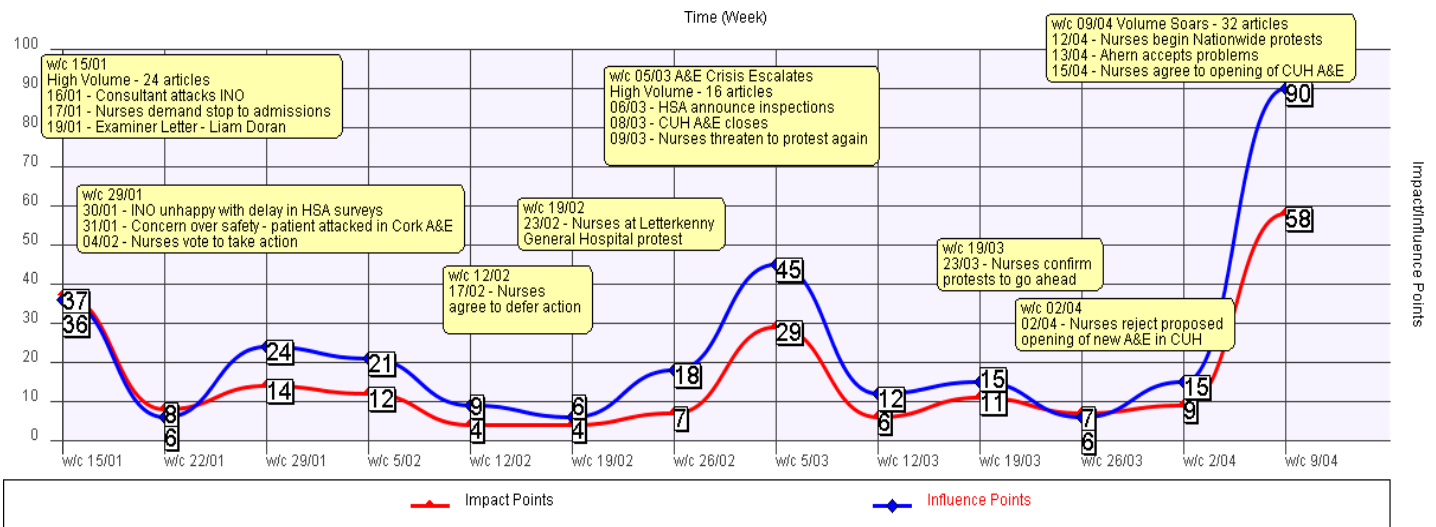
We saw a drop again in the volume of coverage after this period but the coverage generated remained positive. The issues reported on were the ongoing A&E Safety inspections of 11 hospitals and the date the report was due.

Appendices: Impact & Influence Tracker Charts for Main Participants

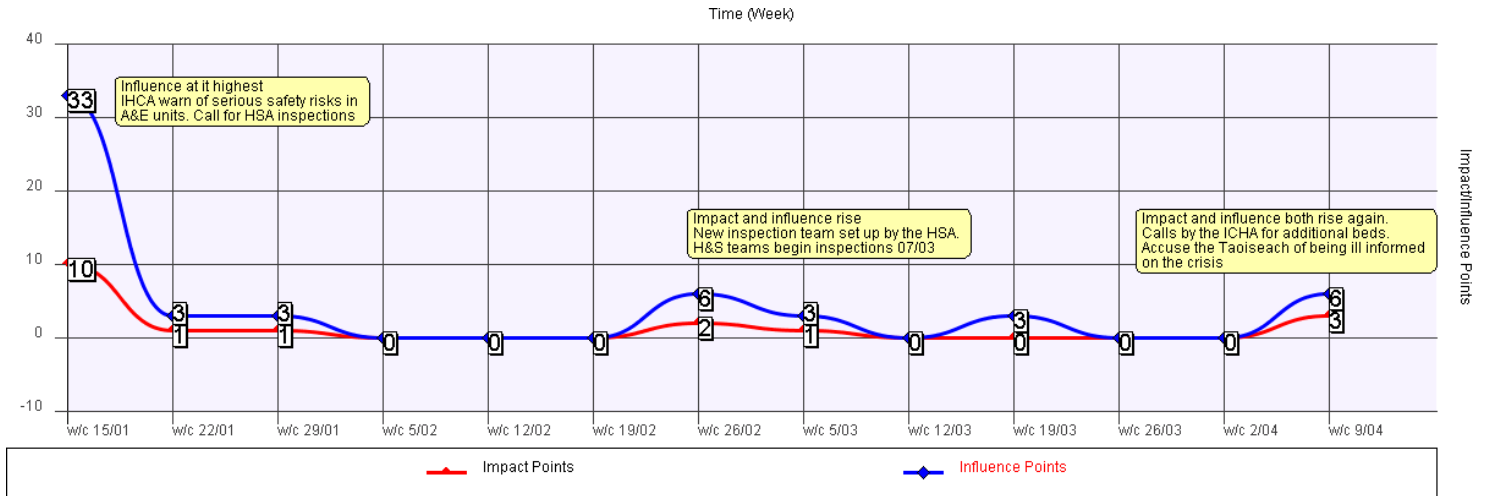
Appendix 1: Impact & Influence Charts for Health Service Executive (HSE)



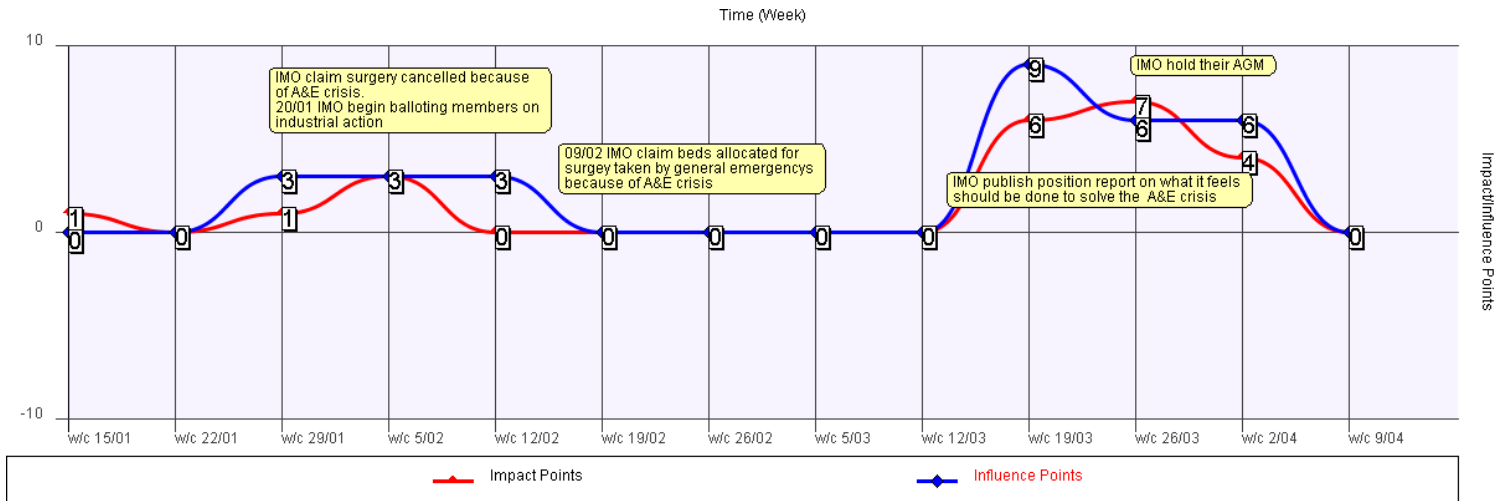
Appendix 2: Impact & Influence Charts for Irish Nurses Organisation (INO)



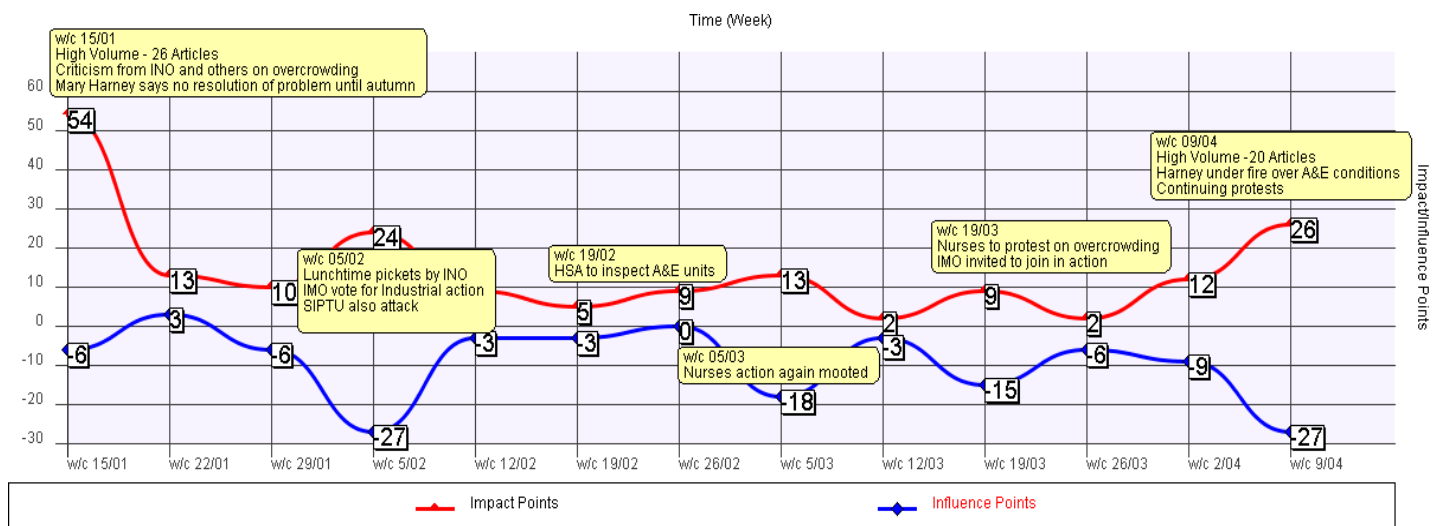
Appendix 3: Impact & Influence Charts for Irish Hospital Consultants Association (IHCA)



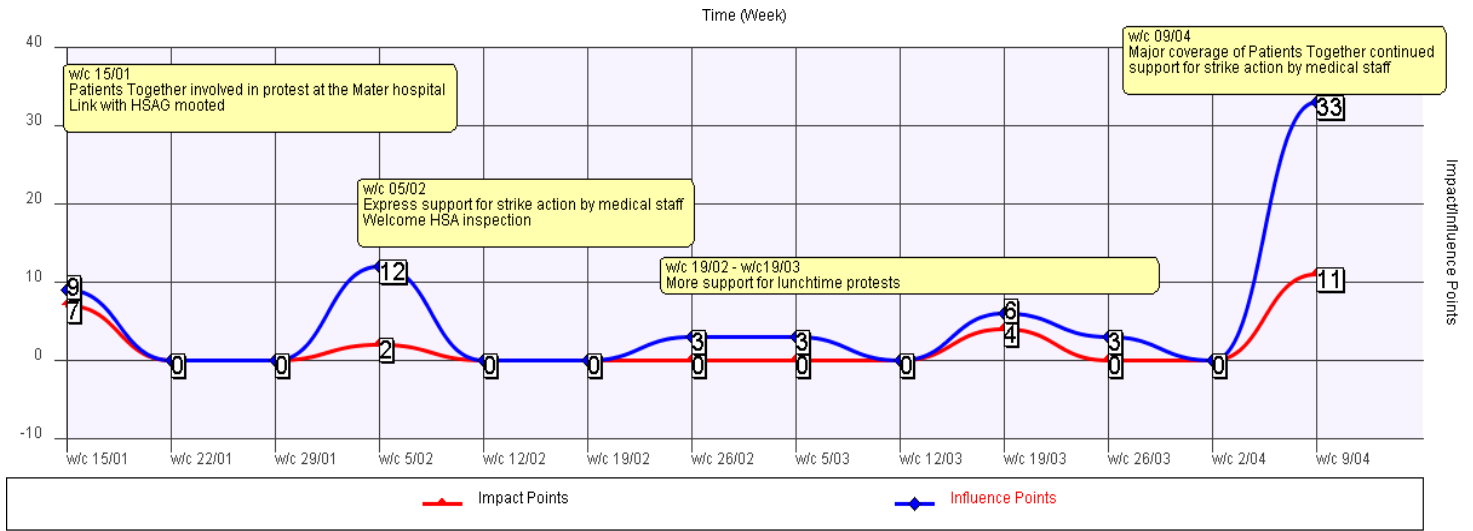
Appendix 4: Irish Medical Organisation (IMO)



Appendix 5: Impact & Influence Charts for Mary Harney



Appendix 6: Impact & Influence Charts for Patients Together



Appendix 7: Impact & Influence Charts for Health & Safety Authority (HSA)

