

Consultant 236

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I am a practicing Consultant working for the past [X] years in my speciality. I have an exemplary record of my outcomes both in the NHS and Privately and have published and presented my work both nationally and internationally.

I have been informed by a number of patients insured with BUPA, who wish to see me privately, that BUPA try and guide them elsewhere. I do not overcharge. I have received no communication from BUPA as to why they do this.

To direct patients away from specific consultants without due discussion is an underhand way of undermining that Consultants status.

If the competition commission is looking for transparency in the private healthcare market, then transparency should be enforced upon all parties with the ability to enforce transparency and challenge malpractice where there is abuse I am aware of other Consultant colleagues who have come across this practice

Within the NHS, it is now a statutory right of all patients to have the choice of seeing any Consultant in any hospital they may wish through the "Choose and Book" system. This empowers the patient to seek the opinion of a Consultant of their choosing. In this way quality of care is encouraged as high standards attract greater referrals.

This choice is often arrived at by recommendation by their GPs or colleagues who have required medical treatment.

It is interesting to note that for the vast majority of patients who have Private Healthcare, this provision is not available. These patients are often channelled to Consultants chosen by the Private Provider. These Consultants may carry titles such as "Preferred Providers" or recommended Consultants, however the selection of such Consultants by the private providers bears no relationship to the experience of those Consultants, the quality of their work, or their standing within the medical community or even their specific clinical specialities.

They seem to be preferred by the private providers on the basis of cost. The Consultant is expected to comply with whatever fees the Healthcare Company dictates. It is the purchaser of healthcare i.e. the buyer, telling the provider (Consultant) what that service is worth. It makes no business sense. The less costly the Consultant, greater the preference.

Surely if one is paying for Private Healthcare, it should be at least as open if not more so than that provided by the NHS This restriction in open Consultant choice is a misuse of a position of monopoly practiced by certain private healthcare providers and regrettably it does not improve healthcare quality. In fact it achieves exactly the opposite where those who are willing to work for less in fields where their expertise is limited have more patients channelled to them on the basis of compliance with the dictats of the private providers.