

Consultant 242

31 May 2013

Dear Investigators,

I am a consultant radiologist working in both the NHS and private sectors.

I do not think that there is a fair or competitive market in the provision of private healthcare in the UK and I feel that this stems from the reimbursement system established by the larger insurance companies.

- It is my impression that an informal price fixing arrangement exists with the insurance companies matching reimbursement rates to the standard 'BUPA fee schedule'.
- Consultants are coerced to agree to fixed schedules with threats of becoming 'non-fee assured' and with the implication that they may also not be quality assured.
- The contract for care should remain between the provider and the patient. Without this structure, normal mechanisms of competition between providers simply cease and there is a race to the bottom to gain business from the insurers. The interests and well being of the patient are not served by provision of cut price care.
- Fee schedules seem arbitrary and do not reflect the time or complexity of procedures.
- Insurance companies have cherry picked provision of cover for procedures in order to minimise their exposure to ongoing care and to pass the costs of any complications of treatment on to the NHS.

Competitive provision of private healthcare would be beneficial to the whole healthcare sector but current arrangements for insurance reimbursement are stifling the market and prevent development - innovation is not currently rewarded unless its got a BUPA code.

I look forward to reading your completed report next year.