

## Consultant 14

2 May 2012

Dear Sir

I write to you to bring to your attention the particularly [X] style of Managed Health Care practised by BUPA.

I am an Orthopaedic Consultant with a substantive NHS appointment and a part-time private practice.

I have belonged to the "Bupa Partnership" [X]. My reasons for belonging to the partnership were partly altruistic (patients did not need to make an added payment for my services) and partly business (being on an approved provider list would attract more patients).

I have lost confidence in my relationship with BUPA recently because of several enforced and unilateral changes by BUPA, which I believe negatively influence clinical judgement and independence.

1. BUPA now demand a written motivation for knee arthroscopy. They have motivated this change by quoting clinical data, the implication being that surgeons are performing this procedure unnecessarily. My problem here is that they utilise selective data to support this restriction on the doctor patient relationship by what is essentially nothing more than a medical insurance company i.e. they have taken in on themselves to influence the outcome of the doctor patient relationship. I would submit that physicians are in the best position to advise their patients on appropriate treatment. If some physician's behaviour is unethical, there are regulatory bodies well able to deal with this.
2. After >11 years without an increase in their tariffs, BUPA have recently, without consulting their "partners", announced a dramatic fall in the tariffs payable for certain common procedures. This puts their tariffs way below their competitors. While this type of managed healthcare is probably acceptable for the NHS with limited resources, I think it is against the ethos of excellence, expected and indeed demanded by private patients. If BUPA wish to pursue this policy, I believe their clients should be made aware of the limited private health services available to them, especially when compared to their competitors. In my opinion this is a [X] cynical attempt by a major player in the private healthcare market to improve their profits by forcing providers to accept lower fees. Like the perennial debate regarding small food producers and major supermarkets, the major loser in the long run will be the consumers, the sick!

I hope this submission is of value.