

Consultant 46

21 June 2012

Dear Sir or Madam

As a retired surgeon who has spent more than 40 years in the NHS and also in my latter years taken part in private practice I am offering some thoughts, which you might consider in your investigations.

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I know that the heads of private hospitals meet a few times a year but I have no concrete knowledge of price fixing. Nevertheless it is curious that the charges for investigations such as MRI are very similar despite the age of the equipment. The fees for the most modern 'state of the art' CT or MRI scanner is pretty well the same as a machine, which is more than four years old. Why are these investigations £200-£400 cheaper outside London – even 20 miles from Harley Street Precinct?

Hospitals that have Charity status do not appear to be any cheaper than other 'Commercial' establishments although they do not pay 20% Vat. This is something that patients have queries many times in the past.

AXA PPP have a list of doctors that apparently charge more than this company's "normal rate" yet doctors and patients alike are not able to determine what exactly is this so called "normal rate" for consultations and procedures.

I feel that Dentists and Doctors, should in more prolonged treatments, make sure that patients are informed of fees at regular intervals for I have seen patients devastated by an enormous bill at the end of the treatment.

Sadly some of my colleagues on occasions may carry out unnecessary non-invasive investigations to pay for purchased equipment and so I feel it would be wise for the physician to make it clear why a certain test is really necessary and explain the disadvantage or drawback of not having it performed. Thus the patient has an informed choice. The cost of the test/procedure should also be stated in advance.