

Consultant 72

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"I am a consultant rheumatologist and was in the BUPA partnership for many years. Recently BUPA virtually halved the cost of tariffs they would pay for procedures. This was a unilateral move on the part of BUPA with no consultation with specialists. I wrote to BUPA explaining that in my opinion the new tariffs were unfair considering they had not increased the cost of the tariffs for over 10 years and considering I had been a loyal BUPA partner for more than [X] years. There was no room for negotiation on the part of BUPA and I therefore withdrew from the BUPA partnership. I then had a patient referred to me by her GP. The patient came to see me as she had previously seen me as a private patient. BUPA insisted that she could not have a follow-up appointment with me and that she had to go to another consultant who was in the BUPA partnership for her follow-up appointment. BUPA also informed me that I would not get any patients within their "Patient choice" scheme as I was not a member of their partnership.

In my opinion this is clear abuse of position of an insurer with a large market share and restricts the choice of patients and general practitioners to choose the specialist they would like to consult. Secondly there was clear interference with the patient's care by BUPA insisting that the patient saw another consultant for their follow-up consultation even though the patient had seen me for the initial consultation and had also seen me in the past. There is also a restriction of practice of the individual consultant who has no power against the might of a large insurer."