

Consultant 84

25 July 2012

Sirs

My comments reflect the same tone as many comments from colleagues. I have been a Consultant Gastroenterologist for [X] years and set my fees for private practice at that time based on BUPA maxima. I have NOT changed my fees (except for consultation charges) in [X] years.

I have recently discovered that patients have been referred by their GP to me privately, they have phoned BUPA who tell them that I am not on their 'fee assured' list and recommend a colleague in my area who is. The patient then gets an appointment to see my colleague who sees the patient and then refers the patient to me as I have the appropriate expertise and an international reputation in the area of Gastroenterology concerned. The GP new that hence the original referral to me.

How can this be in the patients interest??

Also having charged the same fee for colonoscopy for [X] years and it has been paid in full previously by BUPA why should I charge less for a procedure which has not changed at all over this period?

I have written to BUPA several times recently about these issues, first about their telephone operators suggesting other Consultants when the patient has been referred to me and secondly about reducing payment for procedures. I received no reply.

Finally, a recent patient informed me that they were 'told off' by BUPA as the GP referred the patient to me, the patient was told in future your GP should not refer to a named Consultant but that they should phone BUPA saying they needed to see a Gastroenterologist and they would arrange the appointment with a 'fee assured' Consultant.

Patient care should be primarily with the best person for the job, not the cheapest.