

## Consultant 134

27 September 2012

Dear Sir or Madam

I wish to register my objections to the way that BUPA insurance are interfering with patients choice.

I am a consultant orthopaedic surgeon and I have always only seen patients referred by their General Practitioners (GP) as per the original GMC guidelines.

I have always assumed that the GPs make their referrals on the basis of who they think is the best and most appropriate specialist for that particular patient and their condition. They will have learned about the local consultants through various sources.

In the past month I have had 3 patients referred to me personally for advice and treatment by their own GP.

Appointments have been made and the patients contacted in the usual way by my secretary but a day or so later the patient has got back to us to say BUPA would not fund the consultation as I am not listed on the new BUPA partnership. They have been advised to see another surgeon who has joined their group. On one occasion when the patient was referred to me with a problem hip (I specialise in [⌘]), they were advised to see a surgeon who is not a hip surgeon but a knee surgeon

The problem reached a new level when a man who had previously been one of my patients was referred back for further advise by his GP and was also told by BUPA that they would not cover the consultation. Again it was because I am not a member of their partnership. This man had been very pleased with not just his hip replacement I gave him last year but the way I sorted out some of his other medical problems which had previously been neglected. When I looked after him last year his company had insured with AVIVA. Quite recently the company switched to a BUPA company scheme. They did not tell my patient that the list of specialists he could see in our area had been substantially reduced and essentially BUPA would say who their members would see.

Thus I think BUPA are not acting in their member's best medical interests. Surely GPs and their patients know who the best people to see for a particular complaint, not BUPA. I also question whether BUPA have made it quite transparent to their members that patients may not be able to see their first choice consultant but one that has joined what appears to be a cartel. Individual patients, even though they are insured by their "firm" usually have to pay some money towards their cover.