

Consultant 133

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I am writing my concerns over recent unilateral decisions made by BUPA health insurer without involvement of medical consultants.

Being a surgeon I am involved in treating patients. I have worked hard to acquire the skills in a subspecialist area ([✂] surgery). Whereas previously patients would have the choice of which consultant to be referred to depending on their particular condition, patients are now losing this choice and being directed by BUPA to a 'Premier consultant'. Premier consultants are not chosen by the skills they have acquired, but by an agreement that a consultant will accept fees set by BUPA.

Recently BUPA have also significantly reduced fees for consultants for various procedures without prior negotiation with specialty recognised bodies. For example, in ENT Surgery there is a recognised body (ENT-UK) who have a private practice committee. Despite efforts by ENT-UK to discuss concerns with BUPA by its members, none of these concerns have been taken seriously.

Consultants are now left with a choice of either joining up to BUPAs conditions or to significantly reduce their chance of being chosen to treat BUPA patients which is a real shame as many patients will miss out from the skilled expertise of genuine doctors.