

Consultant 184

3 December 2012

Dear Sirs,

I am a practicing orthopaedic surgeon with both a private and NHS practice.

I have been involved in private practice over the last five years and over the last couple of years have had a number of experiences of the increasing problems in the private healthcare market.

1. Difficulty of newer consultants being able to set fees as they are pressurised by some of the private insurers only to charge within their guidelines.
2. Significant reduction in fees for both straightforward and complex surgery as well as outpatient procedures.
3. Insurers medical advisors making decisions on the treatment of patients with no access to the patients full records or clinical review based on a selected / biased view of the literature.
4. Patients being actively directed away from requested and appropriate specialists providing high quality care to orthopaedic generalists unable to provide this care.
5. Directing of Orthopaedic referrals to 'Sports Medicine Consultants' when a specific referral was made to an Orthopaedic Surgeon.
6. Insurers making decisions on specialist choice rather than the GP based on incorrect information on their website (knee specialist also listed as shoulder specialist when they have no specialist practice in that area)
7. Informing patients that i am not 'recognised' making the patient question my qualifications as a doctor not whether i am 'fee assured'
8. The above even when i am 'fee assured!' by that provider!

I would agree with the submissions of many of my colleagues. My greatest concern is the questioning of clinical judgement by those who have not seen the patient and are denying patients potentially curative treatments without the information / expertise to make that decision.

We have been put under a significant amount of pressure due to the high market share of some of the insurers to 'tow the line' with the threat (very real) of patients directed elsewhere if we do not comply.