

Consultant 239

15 May 2013

I am a consultant Urological surgeon working both within the NHS and the private sector in [redacted]. I charge within the BUPA guidelines, but I opted out of the "BUPA Partnership". I am being penalised for having opted out of the BUPA partner scheme. This discrimination by BUPA against me, is directly affecting the quality of cancer care that BUPA patients receive in our district.

I am aware that patients referred to me by their general practitioners are being actively discouraged from coming to see me for consultation, by BUPA. Instead, the patients are being directed to alternative consultants who work as "BUPA partners".

My concern, as a cancer specialist, is that patients are being referred to other specialists purely for commercial reasons. On clinical grounds, these specialists may not be appropriate for that particular patient. As a result, BUPA patients may not be getting as good care in the private sector as they would have received on the NHS.

In the NHS we triage patients to specialists who work within their area of expertise. Over the years, our local GPs have learnt these patterns of triaging within the NHS and, as a result, have been referring patients appropriately within the private sector.

Unfortunately, BUPA's intervention in the referral process, and the GP-Specialist relationship, has resulted in BUPA patients getting a second-rate service when compared to our local NHS practice. BUPA insured patients would do far better following the NHS referral route to see the appropriate NHS specialist and then utilising their insurance if it transpires that they need any surgical intervention.

I am certainly aware of several patients that were referred to me and have subsequently cancelled their outpatient appointments after they had contacted BUPA.