

Consultant 18

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I am a consultant surgeon working in the NHS and perform a bit of private practice. Over the past few years the remuneration has decreased considerably. Patient short falls have increased and require chasing, fees have remained unchanged for 10 + years and in some cases reduced. Medical indemnity has increased hugely.

I am seriously thinking of giving it up, as are a significant number of my colleagues, and new ones are deciding not to take it up. Bupa are making it very difficult for new consultants to start on an economic basis. Their open referral system is in effect the exact opposite directing patients to those who charge what bupa are prepared to pay. These are some of the factors driving consultants to give up private practice.

I worry that without pressure being brought to bear on the big PMI's, we will end up with a managed health care system where cost is all important and choice & quality disappear. Bupa claim to hold quality data but this is limited to charges, length of hospital stay & volume of cases performed.

It would be extreme dangerous to allow the power of the large PMI's to continue unchecked as the quality they wish to drive will/is financially motivated. I am certain that some checks & balances need to be introduced to ensure enough of the right specialists continue in private practice and that quality is maintained and not lost in the drive for profit.