

Consultant 9

4 February 2014

Dear Mr Witcomb

I am a Paediatric Allergist at The Portland Hospital and the Harley Street Clinic. I'm writing to you concerning the recent report that the group is threatened with the divestment of two of its hospitals.

I would like to express my fervent belief that HCA is leading the way in medical innovation, a point the report appears to neglect. Speaking from my position as a Paediatric Allergist I can say with confidence that HCA services in this particular area stand apart from those offered nationally.

Allergic disease is common and on the rise across Britain. However, there's an under-provision of allergy services, a problem reported on by the House of Commons. The Portland Hospital, on the other hand, now hosts a phenomenal Children's Allergy and Gastro Service with consultants from leading tertiary institutions and UK universities. These experts specialise in the fields of food, drug, dermatological, gastro, ENT, asthma and dietetic allergies among others.

The Portland offers a Food and Drug Challenge Service that is consultant-supervised but Specialist Paediatric Allergy Nurse led. Services such as these are either oversubscribed or hard to come by on the NHS and, in the private practice sector, ours is entirely unique.

The Challenge Service is housed in a safe, sterile new OPD unit where the risk of accidental food contamination is minimised. To date we have performed 72 challenges in a short space of time, all safely with no severe reactions reported. Challenge services can only exist in the presence of a paediatric intensive care unit, in case of severe reactions, and so we are all well placed to expand this service further. The Allergy Service has also contributed to pioneering active clinical research.

It is my opinion that HCA divestment would put innovative and highly specialist medical solutions – such as the forward-thinking paediatric allergy care offered at The Portland – at great risk.