

Consultant 29

5 February 2014

Dear Mr Witcomb

I am a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, operating in a team of knee surgeons at The Wellington Knee Unit, part of an HCA hospital. I wrote to you in September 2013 outlining two principal points; that my dealings with HCA do not in conflict with the interests of patients in any way; and that HCA has always strongly supported me in delivering the highest quality care possible.

In the light of the Competition Commission's recently published report, I wanted to write again to emphasise a number of points I alluded to previously.

I practice in a number of hospitals, including the Wellington, and I am always inclined to choose whichever of these is best for the particular patient. In this way I vote with my feet, and therefore the fact that a significant portion of my practice is at the Wellington is an indicator of its high quality.

I perform a large amount of my keyhole and arthroscopic procedures at the Wellington, as both the equipment itself, and its maintenance, are excellent. The Wellington also has a high standard of clinic facilities, a well-integrated, cohesive knee unit team and good links with academia. The availability of PACS across the HCA network, a system which enables x-ray and scan images to be stored electronically and viewed on screens anywhere, adds substantially to the quality of service we can deliver.

My experiences with HCA have demonstrated that it is highly committed to quality, and is matched by few other providers in the UK. HCA has supported me in delivering top-class care to my patients and, given the Competition Commission is recommending that HCA should sell hospitals, I wanted to highlight this fact for consideration.

If HCA were forced to sell to another provider, the quality and breadth of service may well be reduced, with a very detrimental impact on patients, the very people who should be the primary concern for us all. In my opinion, dispossessing a top-performing network of two of its main assets is not the most prudent or effective option. It is other companies which should be aiming to compete with HCA's level of quality.