

Consultant 31

5 February 2014

Dear Mr Witcomb,

Re: Private Healthcare Market Investigation

I am a cardiologist with a sub-speciality in congenital heart conditions working at Harley Street Clinic. I have been practicing there since [X]. Here I have found the service on offer to be of a very high standard and the management to be responsive to both patient and doctor needs. Following the news that the Competition Commission wishes HCA to sell two hospitals, I felt it was necessary to get in touch and express how much of a pity I would consider this sale.

In my experience of HCA support, the group offers clinicians professional independence like no other. When it comes to referrals, consultants are given a wide choice and the freedom to use their own expert judgment with very few management restrictions. I have also found that, thanks to HCA backing, clinicians benefit from the progressive innovation and investment policies needed to work properly, making use of the latest medical advancements.

On the other side of the coin is the extensive interference demonstrated by PMIs, who dictate where patients are treated based on money and not in the interests of the best quality and most appropriate care. PMIs will often seek out cheaper doctors and favour their services, regardless of which specialists would be able to deal with the individual case most effectively. This is to the detriment of patients.

I would make the argument that it is this, rather than HCA's share of the market, which represents the real problem within the private healthcare industry. A problem your suggested remedies have so far ignored. Harley Street Clinic provides an excellent service and I truly believe that forcing the HCA group to sell two of its hospitals while ignoring the pressure exerted by the PMIs will actually result in the decline in standards at these facilities. I would therefore implore you to rethink your ruling.