

Consultant 50

4 February 2014

Dear Mr Witcomb,

It is with regret that I have to take time from my busy NHS, university and private practices to write a letter concerning the proposed forced sale of Princess Grace Hospital. I should state that I have no vested interest in the HCA Group as a company and am motivated exclusively by my concerns for patients wellbeing.

As [REDACTED] surgeon with one of the UK's largest practices my private practice is based at several hospitals including The Princess Grace Hospital. Over the last decade The Princess Grace Hospital has evolved into one of the safest, most efficient and undeniably world-class environments in which to undergo [REDACTED] surgery. The service provided to my patients at Princess Grace Hospital is as good as one can provide in a private hospital setting. This has not occurred by chance. The hospital has consistently responded to my requests for a patient centred sequential targeted investment to provide the equipment, nursing set-up and infrastructure required to provide the safest patient care.

Therefore the news that this hospital must be sold makes me ask whether patients will truly benefit from this? Will the new owner of Princess Grace Hospital equal the current management's commitment to evolve and adapt the hospital based on clinical needs? Would the new The Princess Grace management continue to put its patients first, provide the state of the art equipment for optimal patient care? Would they continue to invest in nurse numbers and training that allows safe surgery and the brisk identification of perioperative problems to minimise the risks associated with surgery? Will they have the resources and commitment to ensure that systems put in place to manage adverse events are adhered to religiously? Will they also accept that some equipment is expensive and may affect profit margins but are in the patient's interest? Will they take a robust governance stance as at present with an appropriate monitoring of surgeon activities and the appointment of hospital staff only those with appropriate expertise? Sadly my experience in other private hospitals suggests that this is unlikely.

UK healthcare – both NHS and private – should strive to excellence. Destroying a clear winning formula can only be an invitation to mediocrity. It is for this reason that I have profound concerns about a forced sale of Princess Grace Hospital since I expect that the current high quality standards will drop, worsening patient experience and outcomes. I can only hope that whoever makes this decision (if imposed) will take full accountability for the consequences.