

IT'S BREAKING POINT FOR THE NHS

Evening Standard – 14 October 2014

We must all play our part in stopping the Government from turning the NHS into rich pickings for global health companies.

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, HAPIA

It is shocking that healthcare workers are so outraged by their treatment that they feel it necessary to strike; that it was just four hours shows the concern they have for their patients.

Jeremy Hunt's gross insensitivity was made apparent when he suggested that if health workers were paid the small recommended increase, it would result in staff redundancies.

What is clear is that the Government has squandered millions on its chaotic health reforms, that it is undermining primary care through cuts to many GP budgets, and that the planned introduction of TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and investment Partnership) is causing enormous anxiety through the expectation that it will lead to an even more broken NHS.

The NHS frontline works long shifts, sometimes 12 hours or more, to ensure patients get the treatment they need. Ambulance staff are under constant pressure to provide the best care in the shortest possible time, and to avoid taking patients to A&E. However committed staff are, they will reach breaking point when they can't afford to pay rent and feed their families,

We must al play our part in stopping the Government from undermining health workers and turning the NH into rich pickings for global health companies. Londoners should write to Hunt and their local MP to protest that the NHS is valued and effective and needs to be enhanced, not squandered.

Malcolm Alexander, Chair, Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association

A Government that told us 'we're all in it together' should be forced to talk about the one per cent pay rise. Now the Royal College of Nursing and other health unions should get off the fence and back further industrial action.

Diana Stallowood

The pay issue causes understandable dismay, but a dispute over one per cent is mainly symbolic and distracts from deeper issues affecting patients.

The NHS's problems have little to do with the new structure. They go back to the investment pattern in the Blair years, which produced much new spending on hospitals, so admissions have risen 40 per cent since 2004 but with little investment in primary care or out-of-hospital services. While the Government is right to press for parity of esteem for mental health, we also need parity of esteem for primary care, to serve the 75 per cent of A&E patients who are not emergencies.

The new agencies are starting to get to grips. NHS England is planning to invest in new primary care models. Some clinical commissioning groups are opening urgent care centres and collaborating with the private and third sector on beds for elderly patients.

Even if funding was available there is no quick fix: it takes time to develop experienced staff. We need to make the case to redesign services to make better use of the nine per cent of GDP to be spent on the NHS. Without serious change, raising this to 10 per cent would make little difference.

Emeritus Professor Nick Bosanquet, Imperial College