

It is seriously being debated for the first time in the history of the NHS that emergency care will soon cease to be free for all patients in all circumstances.

Visitors to the UK (people without British residency) are to be charged for ambulance and accident and emergency services under plans being brought forward by the Health Sec. A 2013 study by the Dept of Health estimated that the service was used by 2.6 million migrants a year at a cost of up to 2 billion, of which 500 million was realistically recoverable.

Apparently these numbers do not include the cost of health tourism (often women coming to the UK to have babies). Mr Hunt believes that the charges combined with the present fees for foreigners routine care, could help the NHS to recoup £500 million a year. All visitors to the UK already have to pay up to 150 per cent of the cost of elective care but ministers excluded A and E, ambulances, and visits to GPs. This latest decision could leave patients facing bills for thousands of pounds.

Apparently seeing an A and E Doctor costs the NHS a minimum of £56 where no treatment is needed and £316 with more extensive care. Scans and tests can cost more than £200 each.

Crisis maternity care would fall under the new charging system. it was previously exempt. I feel it is fair to charge non UK taxpayers for using our National Health, families living in the UK have to pay for it, so it is only fair and reasonable to expect International Visitors to do the same. EU visitors must present a European Health Insurance Card in order for NHS to send a bill to their government.

There will be opposition obviously but nonetheless the recoup would be roughly 70 million each year from foreigners using the NHS, so the Times leads me to believe - which does not include savings from sending the message that it is not free to all-comers.

A 7 day GP service seems to have been dealt a blow by a review of a pilot scheme which found that patients do not want to attend Sunday appointments - apparently it has been concluded that patients taking part in trials simply were not using Sunday slots. GP are saying this proves that the government's obsession with 7 day GP services is misguided, well they would, wouldn't they!

There was an evaluation of 20 sites that were chosen to trial schemes to improve access to GPs using the £50 million Prime Minister's Challenge Fund, found, some success including better use of GPs during core hours and increased telephone consultations. Yet a report for NHS England by an independent consultant added that there was very low utilisation of Sunday GP appointments and concluded the resource would be better used elsewhere

Apparently the Chairwoman of the Royal College of GPs said patients have better things to do on a Sunday afternoon than have their ears syringed. Well when I needed my ears syringed I had to wait 4 weeks, I would have welcomed turning up on a Sunday afternoon and I am a very average person.

While the report found that patients of practices taking part in these pilot schemes had 15 per cent fewer minor A and E attendances, there was no discernible change in emergency admissions or use of out of hours services. This saved £3.2 million a year, against a cost of running the scheme of £45 million and it was concluded by a Dept of Health spokeswoman that the study shows the success of the PM Challenge Fund, delivering 400,000 evening and weekend appointments.

Putting a price on health –
Ambulance call out £180,
Ambulance call-out with trip to hospital £231,
Immediate A&E treatment of broken leg £224,
MRI scan of several areas £282,
Normal birth with epidural £3,345
ECG monitoring and stress testing £794,
minor arm treatment £216,
dental fitting £176.

So I suppose what my argument is, is against the closure of what may be 5 departments at Pilgrim - why now, why not wait for the dust to settle, there are so many new initiatives some of which may work very well.

One super hospital covering a very large rural area just will not work, it will disadvantage almost everyone and will fly in the face of just about every health guideline in existence.

How many more deaths will occur just because people are unable to reach hospital in time.

There needs to be a strategic review of this particular proposal before any decision is made. Nothing makes sense and it doesn't add up. There is money in the NHS it just squandered by poor management.