



NHS Newsweek 19/02/10

Protesters march 'to save Whittington Hospital's A&E'

Hundreds of protesters have marched against proposals to close the accident and emergency (A&E) department at north London's Whittington Hospital. The protest, held on Saturday, which culminated in a rally at the hospital in Highgate, was organised by the Defend Whittington Hospital Coalition. The hospital may have to merge its A&E with London's Royal Free Hospital under NHS plans going out for consultation. The departments could be reorganised by the NHS as part of a city-wide review. The Metropolitan Police said between 200 and 300 people gathered at the start of the march but they did not have a figure for the number who gathered for the rally. Organisers said that more than 1,000 people gathered for the rally.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Trusts fear effects of NHS tariff changes

Hospital trusts fear they could lose 7% of their income because of changes to the NHS treatments tariff. The delayed tariff for 2010/ 11 was published by the Department of Health on February 22. It freezes the standard prices acute trusts will receive for treatments. It also includes the expected measures aimed at reducing demand for hospital operations. Acute trusts will receive just 30% of tariff rates for any unplanned activity above a set baseline. The DoH's aim is to unofficially cap activity levels by making it uneconomic to provide extra operations.

Source of Extract: Public Finance

Equipment for obese 'straining NHS funds'

More than £40,000 has been spent by NHS Lothian on buying equipment for obese patients over the past three years. The rising problem of obesity in Scotland has meant that conventional equipment is no longer suitable in size or support for many of the people being treated by the health board. The most notable investment was in 2008 when local hospitals bought six bariatric chairs – designed for obese patients – at a cost of £15,000, while bigger body bags, zimmer frames and transfer boards have also been purchased. Experts said the rising costs over the years – £9,000 in 2009 compared to less than £4,000 two years before – were symptomatic of a society which was piling on the pounds, and only one of many ways the cost of obesity was hitting the NHS.

Source of Extract: Edinburgh Evening News

Three Dorset councils avoid big job cuts to find £18m

Dorset County Council, which has increased its council tax by 2.97%, has to find £6m in savings. Although Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole have raised their council tax by the same amount - 2.9% - the shortfall in funding is very different. Borough of Poole must find £4.3m while Bournemouth must plug an £8m deficit. All three authorities, acting with the NHS in the region, hope to make future savings by investing in a new initiative aimed at improving the wellbeing of older people to reduce the number of "inappropriate hospital admissions". The project, called Total Place, is one of 13 pilots around England. In a recent report on the scheme, NHS Dorset said £18m could be saved over three years by cutting the number of inappropriate hospital admissions.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Private medical insurance companies are paying corporate client employees up to £200 a night to use the NHS

The bizarre situation has emerged as a response to the escalating costs of private healthcare. Staff at the BBC are encouraged to think twice before choosing private care over their local NHS service. At a maximum £200 a night, the NHS payment is well below the £1,000 cost of a night in a typical private hospital. Senior staff at the BBC, a BUPA client, received a letter warning that there had been a surge in claims for private treatment, and the BBC was struggling to cope with demand. It reminded staff that there was a £200-a-night payment for those opting to use an NHS hospital.

Source of Extract: The Independent

First quality accounts show wide range of priorities among foundation trusts

A review of foundation trusts' experiences, shows that only a few managed to fully engage with patients and other stakeholders to develop priorities in the first year. The review, carried out by the Foundation Trust Network, states that the bundle of priorities selected by individual trusts is extremely diverse with over 200 metrics used to measure quality improvement. It notes that across the country there are several metrics in use by only one trust. Greater commonality, however, is seen in the areas most often selected for quality improvements in 2009-10.

Source of Extract: BMJ

Petition given on bed cut fears

A petition with more than 6,000 signatures has been presented to health secretary Nicola Sturgeon, urging her to protect a specialist rheumatology unit in the Highlands. NHS Highland is reviewing the Dingwall-based service and there are fears beds could be cut or the unit could close at weekends.

Source of Extract: Scotsman

NHS IT deal 'stitch up' claim by Conservatives

The government is trying to fix a quick deal with suppliers for its controversial £12.7bn NHS IT programme ahead of the next General Election, the BBC has been told. Industry insiders and the Conservative Party allege the deals, which would be in place by the end of March, would "tie the hands" of whoever forms the next government. But Health Minister Mike O'Brien said it was "nonsense" to expect the government to suspend negotiations just because of the impending election. Last December Chancellor Alistair Darling said NHS spending which was not front line, such as parts of the IT project, should be shelved in the coming round of spending cuts.

Source of Extract: BBC News

NHS maintenance costs disclosed

The Government has spent more than £135 million on the upkeep of hospital grounds over the last five years, figures show. Annual maintenance costs for NHS hospital gardens, grounds and paths have steadily increased since 2004, according to the Department of Health. Health Minister Mike O'Brien said a total of £135,120,118 had been spent between 2004-05 and 2008-09. This figure related to costs involved in the "upkeep and maintenance of the grounds, gardens and external paths of the organisation site" and included labour costs, he said. Just over £30 million was spent in 2008-09, compared to £24.4 million in 2004-05. The figures were revealed in a parliamentary written reply to Robert Syms, Conservative MP for Poole in Dorset.

Source of Extract: Press Association

NHS Trust criticised for spending £1.4m on consultants

Fees for non-medical consultants incurred by Lincolnshire hospital bosses has cost the NHS £1.4million in just 11 months. United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust has increased its spending on consultancy from £1.1m in the 2008/09 financial year to £1.4m so far during the current 2009/10 financial year. It was also revealed that staff from Ernst & Young have been employed to work on the trust's financial strategy consistently since June. It is unclear how much this has cost the trust but ULHT say that Ernst & Young are not classed as management consultants and therefore do not form part of the trust's £70,000 spent on management consultants to date in 2009/10. The increase in spending on consultancy has prompted Gillian Merron, MP for Lincoln as well as public health minister to ask questions to the board of ULHT.

Source of Extract: Lincolnshire Echo

Missed appointments 'cost NHS £5m'

Missed hospital appointments cost the NHS almost £5 million in just three months, a report has revealed. A report by public spending watchdog Audit Scotland revealed that between July and September last year one in 10 patients did not attend their first outpatient appointment. Over the three-month period there were more than 44,000 unused clinic appointments.

Source of Extract: Press Association

DH accused of 'backroom deal' over preferred provider case

Primary care trusts in the East of England have been ordered by the Department of Health to suspend all procurements for community services. The unusual step has put an end to a high profile cooperation and competition panel investigation that was likely to question the government's decision to make the NHS a "preferred provider", ahead of the independent sector. An organisation representing voluntary organisations has alleged a "backroom deal within the Department of Health". The panel had been investigating complaints from the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations and NHS Confederation Partners Network about NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney. The PCT had banned non-NHS providers from bidding to take over community services, in light of health secretary Andy Burnham's "preferred provider" policy. The panel had decided to take its investigation to a second stage but on Wednesday announced that, in light of the DH decision to stop East of England procurements, would not be doing so.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Hospital Suspends Heart Surgery after the Deaths of Four Children

An Oxford hospital has suspended child cardiac surgery pending the results of an external investigation into the deaths of four children over the past three months. Twenty six children are awaiting heart surgery at the hospital. Those who need urgent treatment will be offered operations elsewhere. A hospital statement said the four children had been "very sick." It read: "Pediatric cardiac surgery outcomes are nationally validated and the data is published. Oxford has been within normal outcome ranges." The statement added that it was "right that we take a pause while we look in to the individual cases, to see if there is anything to learn from them." The four children had congenital heart problems and had been receiving care at the hospital before their operations.

Source of Extract: Fox News.com

Managers at Leicester's three hospitals are planning to close nine wards over the next few months

The University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust said the closures were planned for the General Hospital, Royal Infirmary and Glenfield sites. It is part of a plan to care for patients in the local community rather than in hospitals. The trust said any posts that were cut would be through natural wastage not compulsory redundancies.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Patients hit as NHS cash crisis forces big cutbacks

More than a third of NHS primary healthcare trusts, which fund hospitals in England, are running deficits that have led to a cutback in surgical operations and seen calls to close casualty departments, according to a joint study by the Guardian and the think tank Civitas. The analysis, which used figures from the public board meetings of 100 trusts, shows the health service overspend this year is more than £130m. The Department of Health has warned trusts they cannot enter the new financial year in the red and health authorities which do not cut costs face repaying cash from next year's budget or being subjected to central control. Although the government has said the health budget would not be cut, analysts say that even with "zero real growth" the NHS will face a shortfall of £20bn by 2013 – a gap that will grow to £38bn by 2016.

Source of Extract: The Guardian

Sir Richard Branson's empire (Virgin) has bought a controlling stake in an NHS walk-in centre operator

The tycoon's Virgin Group bought a 75.1 per cent holding in the medical division of Assura Group, which is one of the largest owners of doctors' surgeries in the UK and also runs pharmacies within clinics. Assura operates 30 so-called GPCOs, which provide healthcare in partnership with groups of GPs. They represent associations with more than 1,500 GPs, employ around 150 staff and provide services to more than three million patients in England.

Source of Extract: HSJ

PCTs in Hertfordshire announce merger

The two primary care trusts (PCTs) in Hertfordshire are to merge. The decision came after a consultation by the NHS East of England, and was confirmed by Andy Burnham last week. NHS West Hertfordshire, and NHS East and North Hertfordshire, will join together as NHS Hertfordshire from April 1 this year. Since their establishment in October 2006, both PCTs have shared a management team, chief executive and set of directors, while many staff work for both organisations.

Source of Extract: Watford Observer

Nottingham trust criticised over waiting time irregularities

One of England's busiest accident and emergency departments failed to report breaches of the four hour treatment targets for at least four years, an independent report has said. An audit covering just 17 months in that period has found 1,889 undeclared breaches of the target, but the total number of patients affected at Nottingham University Hospital Trust is still unknown. The report says there was "considerable pressure in the trust to hit the four hour target which led to the bending of the rules". However, Dearden Consulting, which carried out the investigation, found the majority of staff interviewed believed they were following the rules.

Source of Extract: HSJ

The Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival - Liaison Dinner 20 March

As part of The Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival, Liaison's Directors are hosting a dinner at Oriel College Oxford on Saturday 20 March. Professor Steve Jones has agreed to speak prior to dinner on "Nature, Nurture or Neither? The View from the Genes". If you are interested in attending please contact Monica Allen: mallen@liaisonfs.com for details.

Monitor names interim chief

Monitor has appointed David Bennett as its interim chief executive. Mr Bennett was non-political chief policy adviser to Tony Blair and head of the policy directorate and strategy unit at 10 Downing Street under Mr Blair. He has since worked as chair of consultancy The 10 Partnership and advised boards, including the Monitor board, on strategy. Executive chair Bill Moyes left Monitor at the end of January.

The chief executive post has since been shared between interim chair Chris Mellor, chief operating officer Stephen Hay and strategy

Source of Extract: HSJ

Moves

Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has appointed **Jo Farrar** Director of Finance. He was Interim Director of Finance and Procurement at Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust, on secondment from NHS London. He succeeds **Anna Anderson** who has become Director of Finance at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

Jim Rowley, Director of Finance at Stoke-on-Trent PCT is retiring at the end of this month. He will be replaced by **Tony Matthews**, currently the Deputy Director of Finance at the PCT. **David Bowen**, Head of Finance Skills Development at West Midlands SHA is also due to retire on 31 March.

Paul Cooper has been appointed Acting Director of Finance at Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust following the departure of **John Yarnold** to NHS Gloucestershire. Mr Cooper joined the Trust in 1999 as Director of Performance and Governance.

The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust has appointed **Stephanie Watson** Director of Finance and Performance. She was Director of Resources at Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust. **Jason Kirk** who was Ipswich's Interim Director of Finance and Performance following **Mark Madden's** move to the James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has reverted to his former role of Deputy Director of Finance and Performance. **Andrew Armour** is now Director of Resources on an interim basis at Colchester Hospital.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Trust has named **Chris Preston** Director of Finance succeeding **Jeremy Cook**.

Kevin Roberts has been appointed Executive Director of Finance and Efficiency at NHS Calderdale. He was Director of Commissioning and Performance at the PCT and takes over from **Alex Farrell** following his departure to South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust last year.

Karen Miles is the new Finance Director at Hywel Dda Health Board. She was Director of Finance and Commissioning at Pembrokeshire LHB.

Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT has appointed **Kevin McGee** Interim Chief Executive. He is currently Director of Commissioning and Performance Management NHS North Lancashire. He succeeds **Sandy Bradbrook** who is to retire this month.

Vanessa Harris is to be Director of Finance at Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust. She joins from University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust. She succeeds **Sue Lorimer** now Director of Finance and Commissioning at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust.

Richard Hathaway is to be Executive Director of Finance and Commerce at Queen Victoria Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.