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Leading doctors say NHS cuts could save money and lives

Closures of A&E units and other hospital services brought about by savage NHS cuts could save money and actually improve patient care, according to a group of leading doctors. Nine leading doctors argue that aggregating some secondary care into larger buildings would improve the quality of care, and also called for more services to be shifted into primary care and GP settings. In a letter to the Guardian Doctors say: 'Patients may indeed have to travel further for some specialist care, but if it is significantly better care then we believe that centralisation is justified.'

Source of Extract: Pulse

NHS Herefordshire plea to patients to use prescriptions

Patients in Herefordshire are being urged to cancel unnecessary repeat prescriptions which cost the NHS at least £1m a year. The county's primary care trust said returned pills and creams have to be incinerated as they cannot be reused. The trust said £1m could fund 140 heart bypass operations or 30 more community nurses. It is urging hospital patients to bring prescribed drugs with them to cut down on waste. Sue Hickman, a pharmacist with the trust, told BBC Hereford & Worcester: "That £1m could be used to buy more useful things rather than just burning it."

Source of Extract: BBC News

£34m budget shortfall will not hit frontline services, Sturgeon says

Scottish health secretary Nicola Sturgeon has said frontline services in the NHS Grampian area will not suffer from a £34m budget deficit. It has emerged that the board is facing £57m in additional costs this year, but has only been allocated an extra £23m to deal with the further expenditure - potentially creating a £34m hole in its budget. But Ms Sturgeon said efficiency savings made by the board will be put back into patient care and should plug the gap. She said: "The definition of efficiency savings is that they do not impact adversely on patient care."

Source of Extract: HSJ

Parties agree on need to tell patients about NHS service costs

All three main parties support ways of making the public more aware of the cost of NHS treatment and services, such as putting drug prices on prescriptions. Speaking at a health hustings event, hosted by the New Statesman and Pfizer, representatives from Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats appeared to come to complete agreement over the need to increase patient awareness of NHS costs during the coming financial pressures.

Source of Extract: HSJ

First class NHS trips are ended

Ambulance workers will no longer be allowed first class rail travel when attending meetings and conferences. All employees at the North West Ambulances Service – including officers and board members – will now only use standard class facilities. The decision was made by the ambulance trust’s executive management team, who examined a report outlining savings in terms of travel, accommodation and attendance at conferences and seminars. As well as abolishing first class train travel for ambulance staff, bosses have been urged to avoid sending multiple members of staff to the same events. The trust has also established discounted rates for any overnight stays in London that have to be made by ambulance service workers. The report stated: “It is generally considered inappropriate for public sector organisations to travel first or business class, particularly in the current financial climate.

Source of Extract: Wigan Today

Volunteer NHS drivers may strike over petrol expenses

Volunteer drivers who provide a lifeline to elderly patients who need to get to hospital are threatening to go on strike in a dispute over fuel. Around 600 drivers work in a voluntary capacity for the East of England Ambulance Service, often covering up to 1,000 miles a week in their own cars, ferrying around patients from rural areas to hospital appointments – and receiving just petrol expenses in return. But a 72-year-old driver from Cambridgeshire told the News the service had gone back on its word that it would increase expenses to 38p per mile on April 1, leaving many out of pocket. The pensioner – a driver for the service for 15 years – said the existing rate of 37.5p per mile was not enough to cover motorists’ costs, which could force many to quit. Volunteers are currently in talks about whether to go on strike in protest – and he said he expected at least half of the region’s volunteers would make a stand, causing chaos for sick and elderly patients.

Source of Extract: Cambridgeshire News

General hospital under threat as NHS faces post-poll closures

The NHS is facing significant cuts in services across England and Wales despite election pledges from the main parties to protect health spending. Analysis by The Times has revealed that the number of health bodies preparing the ground for possible closures has increased. Those seeking advice on big changes to NHS services, including shutting down hospital units, has doubled over the past year. A total of 26 organisations across England approached the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP), the group of experts consulted on service changes, over the past financial year about restructuring care in their area – up from 13 in 2008-09. Requests for informal advice, which normally involve NHS reconfigurations that may attract controversy, cover reforms to maternity, paediatric, cancer and emergency care services. The approaches illustrate a dramatic shift in attitude to the great NHS taboo of reducing the number of hospitals and beds.

Source of Extract: The Times

Do the maths, and the need for NHS reform becomes darkly clear

The King’s Fund, the health policy think-tank, predicts that if the NHS were to have its spending cut by 3 per cent, even a real-terms freeze across all other departments would require a tax rise equivalent to £220 per family. This funding gap is, if anything, optimistic. It estimates that the ageing population will be likely to cost the health service about £1.1 billion to £1.4 billion extra a year, while the NHS must receive a real terms increase of 1.1 per cent per annum just to maintain quality. Increased productivity is the key, but to do it is not a question of sporadic efficiency savings. To meet the funding gap between now and 2017 the NHS needs to make gains of between £21 billion and £47 billion – productivity improvements of up to 7 per cent per year. Compare that to the private

sector (it averages about 2 per cent per year) and the NHS over the past decade (at best, year-on-year productivity has been flat) and the scale of the situation becomes clear.

Source of Extract: Times online

NHS weighs up use of cheaper drug to stop older people going blind

The Department of Health is preparing the ground for a possible roll-out of a cheap, but unlicensed drug which can help prevent older people going blind, as NHS bills for an approved but much more costly drug soar. Avastin does have a licence, but as a treatment for bowel cancer. However, in the United States and across the rest of the world it has increasingly been used – split into tiny doses and injected into the eye – to stop people going blind from wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the commonest cause of blindness. The manufacturers of Avastin, US-based Genentech, have resisted this use of their drug. They produce Lucentis, which was derived from Avastin, but is made in the right-size doses. It can cost as much as 100 times the price of an Avastin injection.

Source of Extract: The Guardian

Identity Management Technology Could Save NHS £75 Million In Five Years

Salford Software has undertaken return on investment analysis with The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust which, if replicated across the UK's 375 NHS Trusts, could save it £75 million over the next five years. The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust has calculated that prior to implementing its Identity Management (IDM) solution, creating new user accounts within the trust, deleting old user accounts and resetting passwords cost it £39,750.32 per annum in time taken. An enormous 91% of that figure being attributed to password resets alone.

Source of Extract: eGov Monitor

Poor UK housing costing NHS dear

Poor housing costs the NHS more than £2bn a year in treating people suffering from a wide range of illnesses linked directly to living in cold, damp and often dangerous homes, according to a new study. The research, commissioned by the National Housing Federation, also reveals the cost to the public purse of police responses to crimes associated with substandard housing as being around £1.8bn a year. Overcrowded homes meanwhile severely damage children's chances of doing well at school - fuelling a cycle of poverty in poorer communities, the study by research group Ecotec found.

Source of Extract: the Move Channel Property News

Vow to save Leicester children's heart ward

Parents say they will fight any plans to scrap a children's heart surgery ward at Leicester's Glenfield hospital. The NHS is reviewing 11 paediatric cardiac surgery centres in England with a view to closing some centres. Officials say that care should be concentrated in fewer larger wards to provide a higher standard of treatment for children. But parents have argued that closures and increased travel will have a negative impact on young patients. The review is being carried out by the National Specialised Commissioning Group and recommendations are due in the summer. The group said there are no plans to reduce the number of surgeons and the review is not about cost cutting.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Orion Health Helps Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Deliver an Enhanced Electronic Patient Record

Orion Health™ has won a contract to deliver a future-proof solution at one of the UK's largest NHS Foundation Trusts. The project at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust will integrate Orion Health's solution while keeping existing IT systems in place, allowing for the timely delivery of a considerably richer Electronic Patient Record. Orion Health, in partnership with Initiate and Oracle, will help the Trust by delivering concise patient data to clinical users enabling them to make more informed decisions and improve quality of care.

Source of Extract: PRWeb

Election set to delay PFI contracts

Contractors fear that the general election could delay much-needed PFI-funded work from reaching the industry in 2010. Senior figures have told Construction News that changes to the PFI system following the general election could lead to a slowdown in contract awards over the next year. The Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives are likely to pursue new methods of setting out PFI deals, while Labour has also promised amendments to the system. With public spending set to be slashed to repay the national debt, a large amount of PFI work is anticipated by contractors over the next Parliament. The waste sector alone is expected to provide up to £12 billion of PFI work in the next three years.

Source of Extract: Construction News

More Merseyside hospitals to cut staff to save money

Several Merseyside hospitals have revealed they are cutting jobs to prepare for tightening NHS budgets. Alder Hey children's hospital is offering workers the option of leaving with a severance payment as a way to combat budget cuts. The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen, Southport and Ormskirk and Arrowe Park hospitals all confirmed they have also introduced a "voluntary severance scheme". Representatives from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) union have taken out a formal grievance with Alder Hey because they are concerned about the scheme. Alder Hey said the scheme was implemented to avoid redundancies. Health trusts have signed up to the Quest for Quality and Improved Performance programme (QUIPP) to find savings forced by the economic recession.

Source of Extract: Southport News

More questions for health chiefs over proposals to close an East Devon maternity unit

Under a Freedom of Information request, NHS Devon has been asked a number of questions about Honiton's hospital. Around-the-clock cover could be cut at maternity units in Honiton, Tiverton and Okehampton, although a final decision has not yet been made. The FoI request has come from campaigner and local councillor Roger Giles after he claims it was revealed that there has been a substantial drop in the number of East Devon women giving birth at Honiton Hospital. NHS Devon managers said this was due to a local shortage of midwives, rather than a permanent change. But at a recent public meeting former Ottery St Mary GP John Ackroyd said it was "disingenuous" of NHS Devon to say that there had been no changes made already. "I know the changes were made with immediate effect in February when staff were informed that they were transferring to the employment of the RD & E," he told the meeting. NHS Devon says the proposals are still open to consultation and that any changes, if implemented, would not take place until September.

Source of Extract: Express & Echo

Health boards 'already cutting number of nurses'

Health boards in Scotland are already cutting the number of nurses to save money, the RCN has warned. On the final day of the union's annual congress in Bournemouth, nurses voted to call on all health organisations and governments to ensure nursing expertise is not sacrificed in attempts to make ends meet. The union warned that cuts are already taking place in Scotland. It said that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde was planning to replace 386 registered nurses with 229 nursing assistants by 2013, while NHS Grampian was freezing nurse vacancies to help save an estimated £34m in the current financial year.

Source of Extract: Caledonian Mercury

Pay freeze for Scottish public sector chief executives

Public sector chief executives in Scotland are to have their pay frozen in a bid to tackle spending. Finance Secretary John Swinney confirmed the freeze would include NHS managers. The policy also covers chief executives of non-departmental public bodies and public corporations in Scotland. Mr Swinney called on executives to waive their bonuses for the year ahead. Nine highly-paid managers waived some or all of their bonuses last year. The UK government announced in March it would implement a freeze on doctors, dentists, judges and top civil servant salaries in England and Wales.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Cuts "are already hitting NHS services"

Cuts are already being made to frontline services in the NHS despite promises by all three main parties that its budget will be 'ring-fenced', according to a survey of health service managers who say that vacant posts are being frozen and staff are taking on extra work and responsibilities. Almost half of the managers surveyed said cuts in front line posts such as nurses and therapists were happening now, three quarters said cuts were being made to administration and back-office services and nearly 80 per cent said posts were being left open and agency and interim staff were being used. Over 60 per cent said they were already having to hit savings and cuts targets.

Source of Extract: Public Service.co.uk

NW trust likely to opt out of troubled NHS IT programme

A hospital trust in the North West has said it is likely to be the first in the region to buy a major IT system outside the national programme for IT. Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Foundation Trust told HSJ it had tendered for an alternative after waiting too long for the hugely delayed national NHS IT programme, which is meant to install standard systems to hospitals across large regions.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Training budget cuts to hit doctor numbers

Cuts in funding for trainee doctors could result in too few specialists on wards, it has been claimed. The Department of Health said reductions in some areas are being made to ensure deaneries are training doctors in those specialities required by the NHS. But the move could mean hundreds of specialist training being cut, with areas affected including surgery. A spokeswoman for the Department of Health said: "We have been working with stakeholders to review the level of specialty training to ensure it meets the future demand for specialists in accordance with patients care needs. "This will lead to reductions in numbers for some areas, for example surgery, but will also mean increases in others, like GPs. "Strategic health authorities are implementing this to match the specific local needs of their region."

Source of Extract: HSJ

NHS "wasted" £54m on food schemes

£54m has been wasted on "failed" hospital food initiatives over the last decade, according to a report from Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, which is calling for the next government to introduce mandatory health and sustainability standards for hospital food. Since Sustain published its December 2009 report 'A Decade of Hospital Food Failure', it said new evidence had come to light of government spending over £788,000 on another voluntary initiative – the Healthier Food Mark – that "continues to repeat the mistakes of the past". According to an answer to a parliamentary question, some of the money went on a contract for management consultants Deloitte.

Source of Extract: Public Service.co.uk

Booking system launched

The Scottish government has launched a £44m patient management system that will streamline inpatient and outpatient bookings, manage waiting lists, order tests and report results. Six health boards have signed up to use the system, with the rest set to follow.

Source of Extract: HFMA

NHS cuts in London obesity fight 'a disaster'

Health officials tackling London's obesity crisis will have their funding cut by nearly 10 per cent. NHS London is slashing the money available to its public health team, according to its latest budget, at a time when the capital faces soaring rates of childhood obesity and tuberculosis. More than one in 10 children in London are obese, the highest figure in England, and 19th-century killer TB has returned with a vengeance, particularly in the East End. Experts today condemned the cut as a "disaster" and "short-sighted", saying public health schemes to educate people about good diets, drugs misuse and how to avoid infectious diseases are key to preventing the capital's health deteriorating further.

Source of Extract: Evening Standard

Moves

NHS Doncaster has named **Jon Cooke** as its acting Executive Director of Finance and Procurement following the departure of **Sheenagh Powell** to Airedale NHS Trust.

NHS North Yorkshire and York has appointed **Adrian Snarr** Interim Director of Finance. He was previously Associate Director of Finance and Contracting for the PCT's community and mental health services.

James Green has become Acting Director of Finance at NHS Sandwell following the retirement of **Peter Jones**.

NHS Barking and Dagenham has appointed **Margaret Ashworth** Director of Finance and Productivity Improvement, taking over from Acting Director of Finance **Sue Hemmings**. Ms Ashworth has previously worked as Director of Finance at North West London Hospitals NHS Trust and West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

Coventry Teaching PCT has appointed **Clare Hollingworth** Director of Finance on an interim basis for 12 months. She was previously the PCT's Deputy Director of Finance and succeeds **Mike Bailey**.

Leicestershire County and Rutland PCT Director of Finance **Karl Simkins** has been named as Director of Finance at the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust. He will succeed **Joe Teape** who has moved to become Finance Director at Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust.