



## NHS Newsweek 29/04/10

### **Call to cut number of children's heart surgery centres**

Several children's heart surgery units across England should be closed with operations done by fewer, specialised centres, according to an expert review. It was launched after the 1990s Bristol heart babies scandal when children having heart surgery died needlessly. The BBC has learned that all 11 paediatric heart centres are being assessed to decide which to keep open. The intention is to improve care, but patients' groups say long journeys could put pressure on families.

*Source of Extract: BBC News*

### **Nationwide heart check-ups 'may be waste of resources'**

Heart screening tests to be offered to millions of adults across England could be a waste of resources, a study warns. Everyone between 40 to 74 is to be invited for screening for the early signs of heart disease and other problems by their GP. However, Cambridge University researchers say targeting only "higher-risk" people would save just as many lives, and potentially cost less. The Department of Health scheme, announced in 2008 but which is not yet fully rolled out in England, is expected to cost about £250m. It involves a blood test taken by a nurse or healthcare assistant that can detect the early warning signs of stroke, diabetes, kidney disease and heart disease. At its launch in 2008, it was claimed it would eventually prevent 9,500 heart attacks and strokes a year.

*Source of Extract: BBC News*

### **Health trusts plan thousands of job cuts by stealth, nurses warn**

Health trusts are planning to cut thousands of staff "by stealth" to deliver £20bn of "NHS efficiencies", according to a survey by the Royal College of Nursing. Labour reacted by promising that there would be more jobs in the health service at the end of the next Brown administration if it wins the election. The move comes as Gordon Brown addresses the RCN's four-day annual conference today. More than 4,000 nurses have gathered in Bournemouth for the event, which is expected to be dominated by NHS finances. The nurses' union has been riled by a warning from Sir David Nicholson, the chief executive of the health service, that up to £20bn of savings will have to be found by 2014. A survey by the RCN of 26 of the 168 English health trusts revealed that 5,600 jobs were already earmarked for cuts in an attempt to slash costs. That figure could rise to more than 36,000 in a "worst-case scenario" if the trend was replicated across all hospital trusts, said Howard Catton, head of policy at the Royal College of Nursing. The loss of posts – including redundancies and staff not being replaced if they leave or retire – could happen over the next three years, he added.

*Source of Extract: The Guardian*

### **Surgeons treble NHS pay with extra operations**

Consultants working in the NHS have been able to treble their pay, partly by performing extra operations to help the NHS meet targets for reducing waiting lists. A surgeon at Central Manchester University hospitals earned £303,498 last year, his basic £99,969 salary being boosted by £118,520 for overtime, plus "waiting-list initiative" pay. Other consultants more than double their basic pay. The highest paid consultant at Royal Bolton Hospital

earned £221,145 — a basic salary of £93,508 plus other payments, including waiting-list initiatives of £107,402. The figures were released under a freedom of information request by The Sunday Times. Of the 84 NHS trusts that replied, 265 had consultants earning £195,000 or more — making them better-paid than the prime minister.

*Source of Extract: The Times*

### **Mental health services are 'soft target' for cuts**

Significant cuts to frontline mental health services look inevitable as providers have been judged a soft target for NHS efficiency savings. Concern arose after the foundation trust watchdog Monitor revised its funding forecasts for the NHS bodies it oversees, asking mental health providers to plan for cuts of up to 5% every year until 2015 from next month. This was up from original 'downside' assumptions of 4%–4.5% made before March's Budget. The reductions are higher than those suggested for acute services. In a letter to foundation trusts earlier this month, Monitor said the mental health and acute sectors faced 'a different set of risks'. It said previous recessions had hit mental health funding more than other areas.

*Source of Extract: Public Finance*

### **No hope for women's ward**

A vital women's gynaecology, early pregnancy and breast cancer ward at the Royal Salford Hospital is to be shut. A hospital insider said staff were informed that the women-only Eric Rawlings Ward would close in July, with the specialist team of nurses disbanded and services spread around other wards in the hospital. The move comes as part of plans for £16m cuts to the hospital's budget and staff losses of 250 a year until 2013. A 'Keep Our NHS Public' demonstration is to be held outside Salford Royal Hospital. These revelations come in the midst of leaks from the hospital showing plans to chop 10% from primary, community, acute and mental health sectors by 2013, and 15% cuts in acute and in-patient mental health care by 2013, including 750 jobs. Meanwhile, non executive directors at the Salford Royal Hospital Trust have been awarded a 2.25% pay increase, taking their pay to beyond £13,000 a year for attending board meetings. Hazel Blears' husband, Micheal Halsall, will earn around £78,000 for his time as a non executive director of the Trust.

*Source of Extract: Salford Star*

### **Parties clash over NHS cuts**

A face-off between health secretary Andy Burnham and the two men who want his job has centred on a heated debate over how to make efficiency savings in the NHS - and a 'secret report' urging cuts in GP consultation times. The role of the private sector also came in for particular scrutiny as Mr Burnham, Conservative health spokesman Andrew Lansley and Liberal Democrat health spokesman Norman Lamb traded blows over how patient care could best be protected in the face of projected NHS efficiency savings of £15bn to £20bn by 2014. Mr Lamb directly challenged Mr Burnham to publish a controversial report drawn up by management consultancy firm McKinsey which recommended NHS London consider a series of radical cost-cutting measures including slashing GP consultations by a third, cutting the number of people going to A& E departments by 60% and shifting millions of patients into polysystems. But despite being repeatedly challenged on the point, Mr Burnham refused to explain why the report remained secret. Mr Lamb buttonholed Mr Lansley over a donation his private office received from the wife of the chief executive of private company Care UK, arguing it was a 'conflict of interest'. BMA chair Dr Hamish Meldrum took all three politicians to task over the parties' commitment to increasing use of the private sector in the NHS.]

*Source of Extract: Pulse*

### **Swine flu cost in Wales revealed by health minister**

The cost of swine flu in Wales stands at £35m, according to official figures. The cost to the Welsh Assembly Government is disclosed in a letter from Health Minister Edwina Hart to the finance committee. The figure is well below a worst-case prediction of £80m, made before the outbreak's scale became clear. But the real cost could be higher as a £60m contingency fund earmarked for a flu pandemic has been used to ease NHS pressures, including swine flu costs. This contingency fund was put into the health service last year to cover pressures including beds and staffing, caused partly by the outbreak as well as the severe winter weather conditions. The figures, which cover the financial year 2009-10, show that £15m was spent on vaccines.

*Source of Extract: BBC News*

### **NHS spends £5 billion on mental health in Wales**

The NHS in Wales has spent some £5 billion on mental health, it has been revealed. According to the South Wales Argus, mental health accounted for the biggest single portion of the NHS budget in Wales during 2008/2009, and amounted to the equivalent of £196.60 per person in Wales. The analysis of the figures show that 11.6 per cent of the total health budget was spend on mental health, while cancer spending cost £58.8 million, or 7.1 per cent of the total NHS Wales budget spend. It is hoped that such in-depth analysis of the spending figures will help give NHS planners a better understanding how where money goes and enable greater planning for the future. Earlier this month, Plaid Cymru said it wanted further devolution of health services from Westminster.

*Source of Extract: Craegmoor News*

### **Targeted treatments could reduce long term NHS costs**

The NHS could make significant cost savings if it made better use of diagnostic tests and patient information to tailor treatment to individual patient groups, according to a report by international researchers. A survey of 600 healthcare specialists from four European countries – Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the UK – found more than 80 per cent believed “personalised healthcare” could cut medical errors, with 64 per cent saying it would improve patient outcomes. A report on the findings, launched in London last week, says tailoring drug treatment to the bio-characteristics of patient sub groups, rather than adopting a “one pill fits all” approach, will result in greater effectiveness of drug treatments, fewer side effects and fewer drug errors.

*Source of Extract: HSJ*

### **Misplaced equipment 'cost NHS £1bn'**

The NHS is wasting more than £1 billion a year in lost hours spent by nurses searching for missing equipment in hospitals, according to a survey. Research involving 861 UK hospital nurses found they spend almost four hours a week on average searching for medication, patient records and medical devices, the equivalent of around 23 days a year of lost time. The research by GS1 UK, the data standards organisation, in conjunction with the Nursing Standard journal, found more than a quarter of nurses said patient records and laboratory results go missing at least once a day.

*Source of Extract: Press Association*

### **Monitor to look harder for FTs in financial trouble**

Monitor has signalled it will become more aggressive in its scrutiny of foundations trusts over the next 12 months in order to identify early those in financial difficulties. The regulatory body's business plan for 2010-11, published last week, said it would hold a yearly review to try and “head-off challenges to a foundation trust's financial

viability at an earlier stage” and address the trusts that had become “unviable”. The plan says it “anticipates an increase in interventions” necessary this financial year.

*Source of Extract: HSJ*

### **Close hospital units to save £20bn for NHS, say doctors**

Leading medical professionals support the 'large-scale' closures of hospital units to help fill a £20billion black hole in the NHS, it emerged last night. In a letter to the main political parties, they say many hospitals will have to shut their A&E units, children's departments and surgical units. But rather than resist the closures, the signatories have urged the next government to be ready to press ahead with widespread rationalisation of hospitals. And they say it would improve care and save patients' lives. The letter to the parties, sent to the Guardian, was organised by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and signed by bodies thought to represent two-thirds of doctors. It says: 'If the NHS is to cope with the financial pressures it is going to face under any government without resorting to indiscriminate and damaging service and staffing cuts, large-scale planned service redesign and reconfiguration based on clinical evidence will have to be at the heart of the strategy. 'This may mean, for example, A&Es, children's departments and surgical units at their local hospital either closing or providing a different type of service.'

*Source of Extract: Daily Mail/Guardian*

### **Hospital calls in a private firm to help 'cure' its A&E.**

Hospital bosses have carried out major surgery on Burton's accident and emergency department in a bid to reverse its below-par performance. They have overhauled the way the unit handles patients after becoming concerned at its repeated failure to hit a key waiting time target. In a bid to reverse the trend, and find 'a sustainable solution rather than a quick fix', bosses had spent more money on medical, nursing and non-clinical staff and overhauled patients' 'journey' through the emergency department to improve flow. The hospital had employed the services of a private company, Saigei, for 18 months to improve efficiency in the emergency department and throughout the hospital. Although refusing to reveal how much of taxpayers' money Queen's had paid the private consultants bosses hoped the changes that would arise as a result would allow it to recoup the cost.

*Source of Extract: Burton Mail*

### **Pregnant Solihull mums stage maternity unit protest**

Pregnant mums staged a protest against the downgrading of Solihull Hospital's maternity unit. The expectant mothers condemned Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust's decision to shut the unit from this week until July, when it will be reopened as a midwife-led facility capable of handling only low-risk births. Women who are deemed 'high risk' or suffer complications in labour could instead have to travel elsewhere, including the trust's other hospitals Heartlands and Good Hope in Sutton Coldfield.

*Source of Extract: Solihull News*

### **NHS patients in richer areas get operations earlier**

The NHS is operating on patients from richer areas when they are significantly less sick than those from deprived communities, according to analysis carried out by HSJ of the inaugural national collection of patient reported quality measures. Patients having operations since April last year have been asked to complete a questionnaire rating their own health-related quality of life before and several months after the procedure. It suggests “rich” patients are more likely than “poor” patients to be given inappropriate treatment, which is unlikely to benefit them. It has prompted calls for the NHS to set national thresholds for some types of referral. Patients from poorer areas are more likely to go untreated until they are too unwell to recover fully. NHS organisations in richer areas

have argued their greater demand makes it harder for them to stay in budget. Some expect the south to have difficulty coping with NHS investment cuts before other regions.

*Source of Extract: HSJ*

### **Burnham halts plan to close Whittington hospital services**

Andrew Burnham, the health secretary, has "completely halted" a proposed closure of accident and emergency and maternity services in north London, a dramatic victory for campaigners and a "major U-turn" according to his political opponents. Thousands marched to protest against health authority proposals to close emergency services at the Whittington hospital in north London. The health secretary admitted that the plans had not been supported by staff at the hospital. "We cannot go forward without clinical support," he said. The hospital's 100 consultants and the British Medical Association had opposed the plan.

*Source of Extract: The Guardian*