



Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE

Tel: 01132 545843

30 July 2009

To Chief Executives of Strategic Health Authorities

Cc Chief Executives of Primary Care Trusts
Chief Executives of all NHS and independent sector providers of NHS secondary and specialist care

Gateway reference number 12199

Dear Colleague

Paying for additional private care

I would be grateful for your assistance in providing assurance over local arrangements.

On 4 November 2008 following the publication of Professor Mike Richard's report *Improving Access to Medicines for NHS Patients*, David Nicholson asked SHA Chief Executives to review by April 2009 the way in which PCTs, in their area, collaborate to support effective decision making on new drugs. He also asked that SHAs work with their PCTs to assure themselves that the draft guidance on additional private care attached to his letter is followed.

The Department issued a final version of the guidance on additional private care in March, following consultation and David Nicholson wrote again on 23 March 2009 asking you to revisit the guidance to ensure that each organisation had a detailed policy in place that reflects the national principles set out in the guidance. He also emphasised the importance of ensuring that staff are aware of the national guidance and of the organisation's detailed policy, and asked that Chief Executives put arrangements in place to make sure this is the case.

The final guidance on additional private care can be found at the following link:
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_096428

I attach for your information a link to a recent article in the Times "Cancer patients can buy top-up drugs themselves, the Health Secretary said. So why did Joe have to fight the NHS"

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/health/article6296252.ece

You may also be aware that the Health Select Committee published a report (see link below) on Professor Richards' review and the Government's response. The Committee was interested in monitoring how the Richards' Review and the guidance on additional private care are being implemented. The Government published its response to the Committee on 6 July and there is also a link to this below

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhealth.htm>

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_102040

Please could you confirm by the end of September 2009 that you have:

- reviewed the way in which your PCTs collaborate to support effective decision making on new drugs. You may wish to note that the National Prescribing Centre is developing a programme of work to support local decision-making, and is already engaging with SHAs
- assured yourself that each organisation in your area has a detailed policy in place that reflects the national principles set out in the guidance, and has arrangements in place to ensure that staff are aware of the national guidance and of the organisation's detailed policy
- assured yourself that the guidance is being followed. It would be helpful if you could briefly set out how you have achieved and are able to evidence this assurance.

Monitor has confirmed that in its August Bulletin (likely issue date is 14 August) it will draw to the attention of NHS Foundation Trusts the guidance above and also request that they assist SHAs to gain the assurances included in this letter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely



Lyn Simpson
Director of NHS Operations
NHS Finance, Performance and Operations

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