



Press Release

Thursday, 7 January 2016

The junior doctors' dispute has a deeper shadow: see beyond it

***Doctors for the NHS* supports the juniors in anything they do to keep our patients safe and the NHS from being broken apart. DFNHS sees a clear danger in that the public not seeing beyond the inevitable inconvenience any strike must bring. The context is vital, and the government will be doing all it can to turn the minds of the public from it.**

Doctors for the NHS, which has been campaigning against the privatization of the NHS since the 1970s (then as the NHS Consultants' Association), sounds a note of caution over the forthcoming strike action, in pointing out salient facts that the government would prefer were glossed over if any action goes ahead.

Dr Eric Watts is Doctors for the NHS's Chair and a consultant haematologist:

"The NHS has to work to the highest possible standards; everyone is agreed on that. So a career in the NHS means developing doctors' talents and abilities to the full. This means a career in training which gives them learning experience with adequate time for professional growth – a reflective process with senior support and not being exploited. By imposing this contract on the juniors, Hunt threatens that vital need. That is what is at stake. Not some vague, Holy Grail of '24-hour service', which this is not about at all."

His views were echoed by Dr Peter Fisher, Doctors for the NHS's President and a retired consultant:

"We think it is important to remember that the junior doctors, and the consultants supporting them and covering their absence to maintain patient safety, are in a far better position to understand the effects of the proposed contract than someone in Whitehall. That the instigator of the dispute was Hunt, by threatening to impose a new contract which had not been agreed. And that he has never explained how this contract would improve services but appears to be imposing it and provoking a damaging dispute in pursuit of an ill-thought through and undefined manifesto promise of a '7 day service' – which the NHS already provides for emergency cases and always has."

[Ends]

Editor's Notes

Doctors for the NHS (DFNHS) was formed in March 2015 by the NHS Consultants' Association re-naming itself and asking GPs and medical trainees to join. It has the explicit aim of countering marketisation [1,2] of the NHS by gathering the already impressive evidence (eg, on health funding – see OECD figures below); pointing to its ill effects on NHS services and founding principles; and campaigning widely to stop then repair the damage before it is too late and cannot be reversed.

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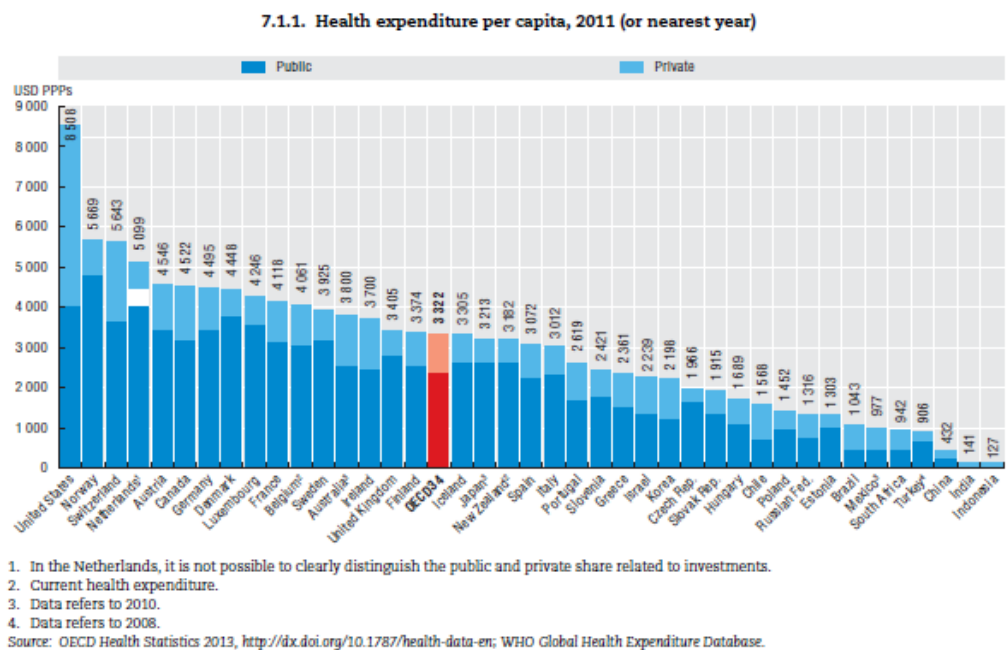
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Doctors4NHS>

Facebook: [DoctorsForTheNHS](https://www.facebook.com/DoctorsForTheNHS)

OECD expenditure figures

These figures give the lie to the arguments that we can't afford a publicly funded NHS as other countries spend more **public** money on health services than we do.

We are 15th overall in total spend and 13th in public spending USA and 11 European countries spend more



[1] Davis, J., Lister, J. and Wrigley, D. (2015) *NHS For Sale*. London: Merlin Press.

Leys, C. and Player, S. (2011) *The Plot Against the NHS*. Pontypool: Merlin

Lister, J. (2008) *The NHS After 60: For Patients or Profits?* London: Middlesex University Press

Owen, D. (2014) *The Health of the Nation: The NHS in Peril*. York: Methuen, Chapter 4.

Player, S. (2013) 'Ready for market'. In *NHS SOS* ed by Davis, J. and Tallis, R. London: Oneworld, pp.38-61.

[2] The belief that 'competition is always best' does not work when applied to healthcare. A comprehensive and universal health service is best funded by public donation, which has been shown to be far more efficient overall than private-insurance healthcare models

[Davis, J., Lister, J. and Wrigley, D. (2015) *NHS For Sale*. London: Merlin Press. Chapters 2 and 8.

Lister, J. (2013) *Health Policy Reform: global health versus private profit*. Libri: Faringdon.
Pollock, A. and Price, D. (2013) In *NHS SOS*, ed by Davis, J. and Tallis, R. Oneworld: London, 174.]