

Interim Guidelines Consultation
Co-operation and Competition Panel
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

April 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing as a member of the public and NHS user, about the new body being set up to facilitate a market for health services in the UK.

One of the Co-operation and Competition Panel's Principles and Rules for Cooperation and Competition is that 'providers must not discriminate against patients and promote equality'.

Yet we have seen in the case of the privately run Independent Sector Treatment Centres, that patients with straightforward, cost-effective conditions are cherry-picked and that complex and thus expensive conditions are routinely left to the NHS.

Principle 5: Appropriate promotional activity is encouraged as long as it remains consistent with patients' best interests. This gives the green light for NHS money to be used for advertising. Given the ever-increasing cost of medical treatment, how can this use of healthcare funds ever be in patients' interests?

Reforms need to be genuinely based on the needs of the patient and there is no evidence that people are asking for a choice of hospitals or of providers. I personally am interested in everybody having access to high quality care – so would like to know where is the evidence that introducing competition between providers will improve the quality of care?