

Dear Norman Lamb MP

How to make our NHS sustainable? We are losing personal morale and commitment faster than money

The news that three ex-Health Ministers have offered a cross-party parliamentary review seems important, welcome and wise.

Our NHS is showing clear signs of stress-fatigue and a 'New Beveridge Report' is timely. This must be informed from the widest possible base, and I would like to contribute.

I am a veteran small-practice inner-city GP. I have spent many years researching what makes for good human therapeutics and what harms these.

While you have emphasised the imperilment of the economic basis of the NHS, you make little mention of the enervation of therapeutic spirit and fraternal cooperation that must fuel its practitioners.

The relationship between money and morale in the NHS is not straightforward. For example, in order to get public value-for-money we have often introduced excessive, unwise and draconian forms of managerialism that estrange professionals from their best vocational spirit and fraternalism.

These losses of spirit are accompanied by rising stress and anxiety, often to intolerable levels. All this has worsened with the tightening of the Internal Market: commissions, competition and commodification are poor nutrients for the human spirit necessary for personal healthcare. Plans that look slick in an executive office often become humanly intolerable for those that must live with them.

I attach two relevant articles. One was submitted to your predecessor Andrew Lansley MP in 2011: you may find it interesting and prophetic. The second has four brief vignettes portraying our system's egregious losses, both human

and economic. All events and dialogue are real: I have disguised the characters.

If you wish to see how all this plays out in a small General Practice – what I have to work with and against – I will be happy to show you. I work a very short tube ride from Westminster.

Thank you for taking on this difficult but crucial task, and for your attention now.

With best wishes

Dr David Zigmond (GP)

Attachments

1. *Five Executive Follies. How commodification imperils compassion in personal healthcare*
2. *Fallacies in Blunderland. Overschematic overmanagement: perverse healthcare*