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Dear Editor

Revitalising the NHS? Get rid of the Internal Market

So, another recent cluster of media exposés on the failures and unsustainable stresses in the NHS. The responses are predictable: governmental justifications and assurances; pundits calling for more money and governance.

Here is an alternative to ease our now chronic impasse: **abolish the Internal Market**, together with its draconian micromanagement and inspection culture.

These are flawed and failed ideologies, like communism. In attempting to replace vocational motivation with commercial incentives we have all but destroyed the best of healthcare's professional art, heart, spirit and intellect. Our profession's restive impoverishment of morale is widespread and increasingly hazardous.

The Internal Market is unviably complex and divisive. It has undone our best colleagueial trust and therapeutic networking, and has replaced these with dense, rigid institutional procedures and documents that are often known to be senseless, often corrupting. Increasingly I have witnessed just-legal feints and 'creative accountancy' to deceive yet formally comply: redesignations to

double-count, cherry-picking referrals for financial or statistical advantage, for example. This is malfeasant NHS Japanese Knotweed.

Our earlier, pre-marketised system worked much better. Older practitioners know this well; many patients sense it, often without fuller understanding. The government's position is nervously defensive; the opposition is now too disarrayed to marshal the formidable counterculture to rid ourselves of this tumourous burden.

The longer we leave it, the worse it will get.

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