

Dear Sir

**Yet more NHS data, but where is our human sense?**

This week we have further broadcast data indicating further deterioration of NHS performance across a wide range. Various government and NHS spokespeople again cavil over the statistics and say that, comparatively, the NHS remains remarkably good for value and quality. Maybe; but few of us on the frontline experience harmonious efficiency.

But there is another dimension to our problems that is indisputable and decisively important: the demoralisation of our service and its roots in depersonalisation. A miserable, anxious and stressed NHS workforce cannot keep healthy, well-motivated practitioners who can provide the kind of personally invested care that is both efficient and compassionate. Filling the resultant gaps with locums and commercial agencies is usually inferior – technically, economically and humanly. This is good neither for professionals or patients.

Yet this is what our serial reforms have produced. By forcing our NHS to emulate competitive manufacturing industries we have destroyed the vocational spirit, ethos and intellect that best motivated and sustained it. We are learning the hard way that these things can rarely be satisfactorily 'managed' by depending on ever-increasing regulation and financial incentives.

It is now hard to undo.

Dr David Zigmond