

NHS growing staffing problems: what about the rot and wastage?

Your headline *Wanted: nurses and doctors for the NHS* (i 19.12.17) leads a now familiar analysis which neglects a fundamental: the plummeting morale of NHS healthcarers and thus their retention. This is due to increasing regulation and industrialised management. The result? An unhappy and unhealthy workforce who lose both work satisfaction and human connection.

Yes, the workload *has* increased for the reasons you cite. The government's claim of increased real funding is more debatable. What is incontrovertibly true – yet receives little attention – is this: the previously wholesome and sustainable working ethos has been all but destroyed by our marketization and industrial-type coercive micromanagement. This has confiscated professional judgement, responsibility and fraternal colleagueiality. Corporation has replaced vocation: the work becomes more stressful and less sustainable.

The result of this institutional rot is massive wastage of staff: earliest retirement, emigration, career abandonment, paralysis-by-litigation, sickness (all kinds) and addictions – all have increased with each 'modernising' reform.

Filling vacancies with locums adds to unsustainability, both financially and humanly. Locums are much more expensive and rarely have the personal commitment or familiarity to provide the best personal care. The costs inevitably rise.

I was a young GP in the 1970s. For many years we worked longer hours than now and pay was no better. Yet the profession was much happier and thus more stable. Why was that?

Even if we can recruit the necessary staff we will not be able to keep them. This will go on until we abolish our NHS mandates of competitive markets, mistrustful micromanagement and alienating, remote gigantism.

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