

UK Follows US Transparency Model for Healthcare Savings



As of 2016, UK National Health Service (NHS) staff will be obliged to declare gifts or hospitality received from drug companies and medical device manufacturers or face disciplinary action or, in extreme cases, prison.

The initiative, called 'The Sunshine Rule' will come into effect next year in a bid to improve efficiency and transparency in the NHS through recording of offerings from the medical sector.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced details of the new regulation following publication of a Review of Operational Productivity in the NHS in June this year by Lord Carter.

"Disturbing evidence has come to my attention that small numbers of NHS staff have tried to influence NHS purchasing decisions in return for payment, gifts or hospitality from pharmaceutical firms and medical device manufacturers," the Health Secretary said. "This is a complete abuse of their position and will be shocking to the vast majority of staff who want the best for patients. As with so many issues in the NHS, the answer is greater transparency. These tough new rules will for the first time expose improper relationships between staff and pharmaceutical companies. Only those serving their own self-interest should have anything to fear, with patients and taxpayers set to benefit."

In 2013-14 NHS hospitals spent £72 billion delivering healthcare with 63% of the budget accounting for workforce costs. The report said that savings of up to £5 billion annually were feasible by 2019/20 with £2 billion being cut from staff costs through better management. Supplies were also in the spotlight. "I think a further £3bn could be delivered from improved hospital pharmacy and medicines optimisation, estates and procurement management," Lord Carter said.

The 'Sunshine Rule', based on a US model, was suggested in the June review as a means to discourage medical staff lobbying for unnecessary and costly medical procedures and drugs in exchange for gifts and hospitality.

"In one hospital, there were 650 sales reps targeting the hospital with 65 on site at any one time. Those sales forces not only have a big influence on choices made – they also have big costs that in the end we pay for," the review said.

Legal commentators have said that keeping public registers to record interests is not new with a similar NHS initiative being in place since 1993. However, 'The Sunshine Rule' could implement the existing framework more formally.

The Lord Carter review also focused on efficiency and best practice recommendations in workforce and estates and procurement.

Sources:

[Review of Operational Productivity in the NHS](#)

[British Medical Journal](#)

[Law-Now](#)

[The Telegraph](#)

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