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MEDIA RELEASE

NHS RATIONING HITS PATIENTS IN THE SOUTH HARDEST

Report by the Medical Technology Group reveals huge regional variation in waiting times and access to medical technology.

Patients in the south of England are waiting longer to access vital medical treatments such as pacemakers, cataract surgery, and hip and knee replacements than those in the North, a study by the Medical Technology Group (MTG) has revealed.

The report examined data from all 209 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) from across England to find out how effective they are at giving patients access to medical technology. It found that nine out of the ten CCGs that performed worse when measured against the NHS 18-week 'referral to treatment' target were in the South. In cardiology and cardiothoracic medicine for example, figures ranged from 100 per cent of patients receiving treatment within 18 weeks in North Durham, while Medway CCG failed to hit the target for half of its patients.

The report also revealed that waiting times are steadily increasing across all CCGs. NHS performance reached a peak in late 2012 when nearly 19 out of 20 patients (94.8 per cent) were referred to a consultant within the 18-week timeframe. However, in April this year the figure had declined to nine out of ten, with almost three times more patients (380,000) waiting longer than 18 weeks for treatment compared with 130,000 in November 2012.

A similar north-south divide was revealed when data from the NHS Atlas of Variation were analysed. The study found that Erewash in the East Midlands is the northernmost CCG in the list of worst performers when it comes to commissioning treatments including colonoscopies, lower limb amputations, and stroke treatments such as mechanical thrombectomy.

An analysis of the number of treatments being performed across the country again revealed wide differences between the regions. Less than one patient (0.173) per 100,000 population in Southampton was referred for a computed tomography colonoscopy, compared to nearly

59 patients per 100,000 in Fareham and Gosport. CT Colonoscopies are a vital procedure for diagnosing or ruling out bowel cancer as early as possible.

Rapid treatment of stroke patients, using technology such as mechanical thrombectomies, can also make the difference between life and death. The NHS recommends that patients are admitted to a specialist stroke unit with four hours of arrival at hospital. However, analysis of data from the Atlas of Variation found a vast range, from over eight out of ten patients being seen within this time (84.5 per cent) in Hillingdon to just a fifth (21 per cent) in Wyre Forest.

Chair of the MTG, Barbara Harpham, said, "Delivering high quality healthcare, no matter where you live, is one of the fundamental principles of the NHS. But budget cuts and rationing is having a huge impact on the service patients receive, and the outcome they can expect.

"This enormous north-south divide can't simply be explained by the regional differences in populations. There is an unprecedented strain on the health service and patients are not being given equal access to the treatment – and most importantly – the technology they need.

The MTG report sets out eight recommendations for addressing the current variation in NHS services, including:

- Publication of aggregate waiting time figures so patients can compare the performance of their local NHS against other regions.
- The creation of a tribunal board to rule on commissioning decisions made by local CCGs.
- Inspections of the worst performing CCGs by NHS England.

Barbara Harpham added, "Quicker and better access to medical technology can save the NHS money in the long term, by avoiding complications and additional treatment, and by getting patients out of hospital and back to work and into the community. It's time to reassess how medical technology is commissioned and to call these underperforming health services to account."

ABHI, AdvaMed, AntiCoagulation Europe, ARMA, Arrhythmia Alliance, Arthritis Care, Atrial Fibrillation Association, BD, British Kidney Patient Association, Boston Scientific, British Cardiac Patients Association, C R Bard, Cardiomyopathy UK, Coloplast, Diabetes UK, Edwards Lifesciences, Eucomed, FABLE, FEmISA, Group B Strep Support, Heart Research UK, Heart Valve Voice, ICD Group, INPUT, Insightec, International Alliance of Patients' Organizations, Intuitive Surgical, JDRF, Nevro, Johnson & Johnson, Lindsay Leg Club Foundation, Medtronic, National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society, Pancreatic Cancer UK, Pelvic Pain Support Network, Pumping Marvellous, Roche Diagnostics, SADS UK, Smith & Nephew, Smiths Medical, St Jude Medical, STARS, Stryker, The Circulation Foundation, The Patients Association, The Somerville Foundation



A copy of the MTG report *'The North-South NHS divide: how where you are - not what you need - dictates your care'* can be downloaded at <http://www.mtg.org.uk/spotlight-reports/>

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About the Medical Technology Group

The Medical Technology Group (MTG) is a coalition of patient groups, research charities and medical device manufacturers working to make medical technologies available to everyone who needs them. Uptake of medical technology in the UK is not as good as it should be, given its great potential to provide value for money to the NHS, patients and taxpayers. The MTG believes that patients and clinicians need better information about medical technologies so that they can make informed choices about their medical care.

<http://www.mtg.org.uk>

About the report

- The MTG looked at a range of NHS information sources and analysed how CCGs perform across a range of indicators.
- The data sets accessed were:
 - NHS Atlas of Variation: <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/atlas-of-variation>
 - 18 week Referral to Treatment times data: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/resources/rtt/>
- Looking at a range of indicators the MTG then assessed how each CCG performs against the other 208.
- Each CCG was graded in terms of performance from 1 (those that had the highest commissioning rates and achieved the 18 week Referral to Treatment waiting time target most frequently) to 209 (those that had the lowest commissioning rates and failed to achieve the 18 week target regularly).
- We then took both sets of data and created the list of CCGs where patients get the best access from NHS organisations.
- The report is based on the most recently published data at the time of writing – June 2017.

The findings were as follows:

Best performing Clinical Commissioning Groups	Worst performing Clinical Commissioning Groups
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Waiting times

<p>CCGs that achieve the 18-week referral to treatment target consistently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NHS Southport and Formby 2. NHS Rotherham 3. NHS Enfield 4. NHS Islington 5. NHS Erewash 6. NHS Tower Hamlets 7. NHS City and Hackney 8. NHS Corby 9. NHS Rushcliffe 10. NHS Greater Huddersfield 	<p>CCGs that adhere to 18-week referral to treatment target least:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NHS South Norfolk 2. NHS Hammersmith and Fulham 3. NHS North East Hampshire and Farnham 4. NHS South Kent Coast 5. NHS Bradford City 6. NHS Castle Point and Rochford 7. NHS Barking and Dagenham 8. NHS Canterbury and Coastal 9. NHS North East Essex 10. NHS Isle of Wight
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Commissioning

<p>CCGs with the highest commissioning rates on the Atlas of Variation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NHS Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees 2. NHS Cumbria 3. NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale 4. NHS West Norfolk 5. NHS Bolton 6. NHS Shropshire 7. NHS Ealing 8. NHS St Helens 9. NHS Oldham 10. NHS Vale Royal 	<p>CCGs with the lowest commissioning rates on the Atlas of Variation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NHS Kingston 2. NHS Newham 3. NHS Southampton 4. NHS Luton 5. NHS Richmond 6. NHS Corby 7. NHS Slough 8. NHS Erewash 9. NHS Camden 10. NHS South Reading
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Overall patient access

<p>Overall in terms of patient access the best performing CCGs were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NHS Southport and Formby 2. NHS Islington 3. NHS Fareham and Gosport 4. NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale 5. NHS Rotherham 6. NHS West Lancashire 7. NHS Bury 8. NHS South Cheshire 9. NHS Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees 10. NHS Oldham 	<p>Overall in terms of patient access, the worst performing CCGs were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NHS West London 2. NHS Isle of Wight 3. NHS Ashford 4. NHS Thanet 5. NHS Southampton 6. NHS Havering 7. NHS North East Essex 8. NHS South Kent Coast 9. NHS South Reading 10. NHS Castle Point and Rochford
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