

9th June 2006

Mrs Val Gooding CBE
Chief Executive Officer BUPA
BUPA House
15-19 Bloomsbury Way
London
WC1A 2BA

Dear Mrs Gooding

We, the consultant ophthalmic surgeons and anaesthetists as shown on the attachments, who are fully accredited (currently recognised by BUPA) do not intend to put our names forward for inclusion in the BUPA Approved Ophthalmology Network. We feel very strongly that this network would interfere with our relationship with our patients, both existing and in the future.

We do not see that it is appropriate or necessary for an insurance company to decide on what constitutes good clinical practice. The requirements under your tendered document for the hospital provider to furnish BUPA Insurance with data about our clinical performance is an unnecessary intrusion into our already well regulated and closely monitored profession. Not only is this requirement by BUPA superfluous but it raises the question of BUPA's expertise and right to act as a professional scrutiniser. We will abide by and contribute to professionally led audits and guidelines but not to those that have been modified (for whatever reason) by an insurance company. This point has been made to you by the President of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists who is unable to support your document.

Further, it seems strange that consultants must make a financial commitment in order to achieve the status of BUPA "approval". We thus completely reject the concept that BUPA has any role in the accreditation, recognition or clinical assessment of consultants.

We wish to remain free to treat our patients, as we deem clinically appropriate, based on medical evidence and at the highest standard. Indeed this is a legal requirement as defined by the GMC in its guidance to doctors in Good Medical Practice.

We also reject any suggestion that we (acting separately) cannot decide on our own fee levels in a free market. We will as individuals, whenever possible, always make the patient aware in advance of our potential fees. If our patients are insured most or all will receive full insurance reimbursement; if not they will pay themselves. The contractual relationship has always been and should remain between the patient and their doctor and not between the insurance company and the doctor.

If your scheme comes to fruition not only will it limit new patients' choice but also may break existing doctor/patient relationships by denying access to further medical services from a BUPA non-approved doctor.

We are prepared to send you our basic contact details for administrative purposes but no details of our clinical practice. We also feel that the constraints placed upon us in signing the Declaration at the end of your recognition contract are too onerous and one sided and we cannot agree to sign this.

We will, of course, continue to offer our services to all patients, including those who are currently insured with BUPA, but we will not be part of your 'Approved Ophthalmology Network'.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNED BY 35 CONSULTANT OPHTHALMOLOGISTS AND ANAESTHETISTS

Copy: Dr Natalie J Macdonald, BUPA, Thames Side House, South Street, Staines. TW18 4TL