

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

CONSULTANT OPINION ABOUT INSURANCE LEAD RESTRICTIVE SPECIALITY NETWORKS

14 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AA
tel 020 7222 0975
fax 020 7222 4424
email info@fipo.org
web www.fipo.org

FIPO
federation of independent
practitioner organisations

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A series of proposals by some private medical insurers, to develop speciality networks, has been viewed by consultants as an attack on clinical decision-making and patient choice. Ophthalmology services are the first target, with other specialties expected to follow.

Several professional bodies and speciality associations have objected to these initiatives, which they believe will increase the insurers' control, and undermine the doctor-patient relationship and existing professional standards which are fundamental to best patient care.

Independent research has been carried out for the Federation of Independent Practitioner Organisations (FIPO) to measure the opinions of Orthopaedic and ENT surgeons.

Results from around 1,000 consultants showed that:

- Only 3% of surgeons surveyed agree with the strategy of some insurers, including BUPA Insurance, to create networks of preferred providers in different specialties
- 94% of Orthopaedic and 95% of ENT surgeons believe that a network in their specialty would restrict patient choice
- 88% of Orthopaedic and 95% of ENT surgeons believe that approved provider networks remove both consultant independence and the consultant's contract with the patient
- Only 5% of Orthopaedic and 2% of ENT surgeons believe that a network in their specialty would lead to higher clinical standards
- Only 2% of Orthopaedic and ENT surgeons believe that an insurer should direct clinical care plans

Initiatives by insurers, or companies such as Milliman, to introduce structured clinical care pathways and guidelines for particular medical conditions are also unpopular, according to respondents.

- Less than 3% of respondents agree that an insurer should develop clinical guidelines or dictate length of stay for procedures
- Instead, 94% and 96% of Orthopaedic and ENT surgeons respectively confirmed that the task is more suited to professional organisations such as the Royal Colleges
- 94% of Orthopaedic and 93% of ENT surgeons believe an insurer taking the role of gatekeeper of secondary care is inappropriate

Over 95% of all consultants believe that these strategies are commercial rather than quality-led. Another concern is the role organisations such as BUPA Insurance are trying to take in auditing and accrediting consultants.

- Only 2% of Orthopaedic and 3% of ENT surgeons agree that an insurer should be involved in assessing or accrediting consultants
- 94% of surgeons in both groups would submit clinical data to a professionally led and agreed national confidential audit. However only 11% and 8% of Orthopaedic and ENT surgeons respectively would provide such information to an insurer

For further information visit: www.fipo.org.

The Federation of Independent Practitioner Organisations (FIPO) represents professional independent medical organisations and specialist groups in Britain.

It provides guidance, policies and co-ordination to membership organisations, acting on behalf of the profession to advance the cause of independent health care.

FIPO promotes the highest standards of health care provision, achieved through robust clinical governance and audit, as well as expert, independent advice for best patient care and clinical outcomes.

FIPO CGAC (Clinical Governance Advisory Committee) has provided support and information to hospital Medical Advisory Committee Chairmen around the UK and has developed formal, professionally structured Guidelines to assist them in their role.

FIPO Partners:

- Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain & Ireland
- Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain & Ireland
- Association of Independent Radiologists
- Association of Surgeons in Training
- Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland
- British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons
- British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons
- ENT-UK
- British Association for Surgery of the Knee
- British Hip Society
- British Orthopaedic Association
- British Orthopaedic Trainees Association
- British Society of Neurological Surgeons
- FIPO National Medical Advisory Committee
- Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
- London Consultants' Association
- Sussex Association of Consultants
- UK & Ireland Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons