



MEDICAL TRAVEL  
SUMMIT 2015

# THE EU DIRECTIVE: PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: **A UK PERSPECTIVE**

DAY 2: IS THE EU DIRECTIVE WORKING?

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# The EU Directive: Putting it into practice: A UK perspective

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# A Single UK NHS Practice?

- A 'toxic' UK national political mix?
  - The NHS
  - UK's relationship with the EU
- Health – a devolved power
  - England, Westminster (Cons/Lib Dem Coalition)
  - Northern Ireland, Stormont (Power 'sharing' nationalists/unionist parties)
  - Scotland, Edinburgh (SNP majority government)
  - Wales, Cardiff (Labour majority government)
  - Late in 2013 all 4 administrations adopted versions of the NHS (Cross Border Healthcare) Regulations
- Variations in response and practice emerging in 4 NHSs

# Investigation of Welsh Patient Out-Flow 2011-14

- All round ignorance of EU Directive in both civil and medical communities
- Collaboration with BBC Wales Health Correspondent (Owain Clarke)
  - October 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 Headline news item across all media channels in Wales.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-29512205>
- In June 2014, FoI requests to 7 Health Boards in Wales
  - Over 3 years fewer than 30 funded applications reported. Of these 9 from 1 Board for treatment in the fields of trauma and orthopaedics, dental, urology, spinal trauma and ear, nose and throat surgery at hospitals in Poland, Belgium, Bulgaria, Austria and Slovakia
  - Backdrop of Auditor General for Wales Report (2015) cataloguing mismatch of demand and supply of elective health care and resultant waiting lists.

# Patient A – Hip Replacement

- June 2013 Initial Diagnosis
- Welsh Response
  - Out patient consultation offered September (withdrawn by hospital), re-offered for December 2013
  - GP warns of at least 18 month wait for treatment beyond out-patient appointment
  - Patient enquires about local private treatment option, £9000-12000.
- UZ Gent Response
  - Digital image, email and telephone diagnostic, offers surgery “Monday and Wednesday, when do you want to come?”
- GP response to patient’s plan to use Article 56
- Application to local Health Board 1 week before departure
- Treatment at UZG November 5 – 10 2013
- Follow-up in Wales

# Patient A – Hip Replacement (£s)

- Upfront payment
    - Hospital (5 days) 9000
    - Travel and accomm. (spouse) 500
    - Total 9500
  - Receipts
    - Reimbursement NHS Wales 6500
    - Refund from UZG 1160 7660
    - (European Payment Order Feb 2015)
  - Net Cost 1840
- (At 2014 exchange rates)

# The UK story so far

- Political issue at all levels: supra-state, nation state, regional government, professional, personal
- Very low take up by UK patients of treatment under Article 56 (on evidence of Wales)
- Rational solution to improving access to elective health care in EEA countries, better matching demand and supply.
- So WHY, what's going on in practice?

# Why?

- Health Policy community
  - Ignorance? Dis-interest? Political sensitivity?
- Patient
  - Subversion? Treachery? Fear?
- UK Medical professionals
  - Imperialism?
  - Power inversion in doctor/patient relationship?
  - Economic self-interest and protection of 'private' income?