

Feature:

The NHS and the Rise of Privatisation



If this isn't enough, then let's look at Spain and its particularly successful free health services. With free healthcare offered to any resident, a huge portion of the population in Spain use free medical care. In recent years, only 18% of patients have switched to private care, meaning that a similar public/private model has proven successful, with free medical care also being offered to tourists! One could argue that a free health service is certainly a positive for a country, provided it is executed correctly, of course.

We have covered the positives and the negatives. Therefore, the only thing missing is a privatisation *success* story – and trust me, there are a few. As mentioned before, this is not the first we've heard of privatisation (both in the U.K *and* across the world), and so this not-so-new concept may not be as diabolical as once thought. The United States was a pretty convincing argument as to why privatisation may not be the best route to go down, but it wouldn't be fair to leave it there.

One of the best *private* healthcare systems in the world belongs to Switzerland under the basis of a universal care service. Now, although not exclusively privatised, the healthcare system in Switzerland relies on a mandatory ownership of health insurance, alongside the fact that no free healthcare is provided in any shape or form. The Swiss

Federal Law on Health Insurance ensures that all residents have health insurance, equating to 8% of their personal income which is paid towards premium insurance. However, if the premium reaches higher than 8% of their income, then a subsidiary is provided by the government, thus ensuring each individual the same type of insurance coverage. This form of healthcare is extremely successful, leaving Switzerland with a life expectancy of above 83 years old. See, it's not all bad, is it?

After discussing all of this, things are still not entirely set in stone. Feelings differ on the NHS from day to day – even in Government – and so it's really quite hard to place the future of the National Health Service anywhere. It's completely possible that private companies may not even materialise amongst the U.K healthcare system, leaving us with a similar system to what is now available. However, with a 16% rise in vacancy rates for the health service, and a decrease in the amount of nursing home beds (amounting to 4000), one could argue that the National Health Service is receiving pressure upon pressure, and it may just be too much for the 60 year old health service to handle.

In conclusion, the U.K's free healthcare has seen far better days; the stress mounting is becoming more and more aggressive, and it seems as though the National Health Service is beginning to buckle. Many allusions have been made, but it really comes down to this: is the NHS beneficial anymore? Perhaps we have been slowly moving towards privatisation for some time now, or perhaps the very thing that is predicted to *fix* the problem of free healthcare, will effectively be the destruction of what was never broken. One could argue that unfortunately, only time will tell.

