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Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • hospitalworkerbulletin@gmail.com • 0207 394 8923

Colchester: NHS Under Pressure

The CQC says managers in Colchester General have been fiddling the figures on cancer waiting times, and bullying staff that tried to tell the truth. From some of the headlines in the newspapers, you might have thought this was all about nurses neglecting people, rather than management deception and bullying. On one level it's hard to blame the figure fiddlers - they were trying to protect their budget. In this market driven NHS there are financial penalties for breaching targets, which means worse healthcare for patients. In our hospital that we've fought hard to defend, I've been disgusted at the stories of neglect, and lack of compassion that patients tell me. Scratch the surface of any hospital now, and there's often a scandal that can be 'exposed'. It's an indictment of the CQC system that they don't identify more of these problems.

The press love having more 'evidence' to use to discredit the NHS. And their anti-NHS propaganda is having an effect. From record high satisfaction levels in 2010, the surveys now show the public have never been so dissatisfied with the NHS. Yet the NHS continues to provide a service far superior to any private provider in the UK at the present time. Every day patients come to the NHS because despite their wealth they can't find any other service that has the expertise to provide them with the healthcare they need.

These 'scandals' are mostly a result of a lack of resources, combined with the ever increasing pressure for hospitals to behave like businesses, forced to prioritise finances rather than health outcomes. Target-culture produces perverse results. We know harsh punishments lead to people hiding mistakes instead of

learning from them, and addressing problems. This goes for organisations as much as for nurses on the ground. Financial penalties for breaching targets are more devastating in this current climate of cuts, and closure of whole services.

Part of the solution to these problems should be trade unions. In Colchester they supported the whistleblowers who finally succeeded in alerting the CQC. Unions should be the natural organisation for workers to turn to when they feel that patient care is suffering - & unions should help stop these circumstances arising in the first place. In every workplace union reps should be working on health and safety, and workplace conditions to ensure that workers are able to provide a good service. On a national level, they should be battling with the government to protect the NHS from the cuts, privatisations, and market pressures that are the cause of many of these scandals.

We need to build and strengthen unions so that they can do this, but we also need to demand of union leaders that they start to lead us in the battle to save our NHS.

National A&E Crisis

Dr Bruce Keogh, the Tory's medical adviser, has announced his two pronged approach for tackling the growing A&E crisis. He plans to shut down more A&E departments and make it more difficult to get an ambulance to take you to hospital. His full report into Urgent Care will be published after *Solidarity* goes to press but like the previous three years of Tory health policy, we expect Keogh to identify a problem and then put in place measures to make things worse. A&E is the "canary in the mine" of the health service. If there are big queues at A&E then there are problems in the rest of the system. Wards have been shut down, community services have been cut. Bed occupancy is averaging above 85% the maximum for safe patient care. There has been a 6% reduction in the number of overnight hospital beds in the NHS since 2010.(1)

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LHW provides a forum for staff at the hospital to tell their stories and air their views. If you have a story to tell or an opinion to share then get in touch. The bulletin is edited by healthcare professionals. All articles are published anonymously and we will ensure confidentiality is upheld. Email: