

Dear Senator Kerry,

Your reported demand that "lies" about health care reform be refuted is essential and requires an urgent response. To that end, may we - health professionals and patients - from Britain respectfully expose those "lies" which are about our NHS, a health care system which we think works successfully for the benefit of all our fellow countrymen.

**BACKGROUND:** The NHS was created in 1948. Its goal was to provide comprehensive medical care, universal coverage for the population free of charge at the time of need. It still works despite the huge, and increasing, demands on its financial and practical resources. The NHS is a publicly funded system which is paid for through taxes and is largely publicly delivered. It is available free of charge to all regardless of ability to pay, and does not discriminate against those with pre-existing conditions

**THE COST:** The NHS provides universal coverage while costing 8% of UK GDP. The US system currently costs 16% of GDP but leaves 45 million without insurance and a further 25 million are underinsured

**CARE FOR THOSE WITH PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS:** In the US people with pre-existing conditions are precluded by private insurance companies from receiving coverage for those conditions. The NHS is literally a life saver for those with pre-existing conditions, who are not denied care. It is vitally important that the NHS, and any government financed health plan anywhere, undertake the care of such people.

**CARE FOR THE ELDERLY:** There is NO cut-off age for health care in the NHS. Senator Kennedy, *like anyone else of that age*, or older, and with that condition, would have been treated by the NHS with high levels of care, attention and compassion. Care for the elderly includes ensuring flu injections, free medication, free operations as needed, free nursing care visits and free clinical equipment in private homes and in nursing home facilities

**CARE FOR THE DISABLED:** Professor Stephen Hawking of Cambridge University, recently awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama, is disabled and has always been under the care of the NHS. Professor Hawking is an outspoken admirer of NHS care- like thousands of others who are disabled. There is free access to medical care for the chronically sick and disabled. This includes free medication and free operations, if required, to refurbishment of homes to accommodate the needs of the disabled and free home nursing visits,

**FREE MEDICATION:** All children up to the age of 16 and all adults over the age of 60 get totally free medication from the NHS. Many people with chronic conditions also benefit from free medicine, as well as the unemployed. No one is denied free medication if they need it. For the minority who pay there is a standard charge of \$11 dollars per prescription regardless of the real expense of the drug. 88% of drugs are dispensed without charge. Some parts of the UK have abolished

prescription charges altogether.

PATIENT CHOICE: There is NO "death panel" in the UK NHS or anywhere else in the UK health care sector.

-Termination of a pregnancy is a personal decision if approved by two doctors under the terms of the 1967 Abortion Act. NO board or organization of any kind makes any decision about termination for fetal abnormality. Such decisions are personally made by those seeking such procedures after counselling by medical and other health professionals.

-Counselling and advice for the elderly in determining *their* wishes for *their* future care is voluntary. It is a service to assist those wishing it, to provide information about issues such as living wills. This is similar to the US proposed Section 1233, which provides counselling and assistance to those wishing *voluntarily* to make their own arrangements for their future, medically and physically.

-Patients are normally registered with a family doctor practice of their choice, which ensures continuity of care and the building of a relationship between doctor and patient. *The patient is free to change practice at any time.* A patient is able to see any doctor immediately in general practice although seeing his or her own family doctor may require a few days waiting time. If the patient requires referral for specialist opinion or treatment, they can choose whichever hospital they prefer.

INSURANCE: Like your Healthy San Francisco medical plan, those in the UK can also take out private insurance any time they wish. The co-existence of public and private coverage ensures complete freedom of choice. UK insurance companies competing to provide private health care are among the top 100 biggest earning companies in the UK.

Survey after survey shows that the British public as a whole expresses a high degree of satisfaction with our NHS. (90% say they are satisfied or very satisfied with it). At the same time the NHS has shown itself to be open to – and often the source of - innovation. How the US manages its own health care reform will doubtless provide us with new ideas about how to improve some aspects of our own NHS service. In the same spirit, we respectfully present what evidently works well here for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

