

Finally, may I turn to the important question of quality standards and your request that steps should be taken to establish the standards to which we should work in the South West Region. Taking this at its face value, and assuming that it partly arises out of my letter to the RGM of 3rd January, then we would wish to participate actively in such an exercise. However, we were confused and disappointed to see the repetition of the statement, that some "DHAs are dissatisfied with the service from Bristol on both cost and quality grounds...." (Ischaemic Heart Disease Para. 5), as we believe that this is both unfounded and potentially damaging to us. Surprisingly, in the next section of the same paragraph it is stated that "there are no waiting list pressures"; as I stated in my letter to the RGM, waiting time is the glaring problem, and of course is due to the historic and ongoing pressure which has been relentlessly placed on the Cardiac Unit in Bristol, in the context of the inadequate provision in the region as a whole.

Just one purchaser (Exeter) has complained to us and that is specifically about waiting times. The Regional Committee in Cardiac Services had no issue to raise with UBHT other than waiting times. As a consequence I am not quite sure what you have in mind for the comparative exercise in quality and therefore would need to discuss with you the whole issue before offering specific advice or suggestion. If medical outcomes are an issue, then authoritative advice would be needed, which could be obtained by inviting the Royal College of Surgeons or the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons to nominate a suitable senior person; if an assessment by mid March is needed it might be best for the RHA or the RHA with the UBHT to make a direct approach to a senior figure in this speciality such as Mr. J.D. Parker of St. George's Hospital, London, or Professor D.J. Wheatley of Glasgow, who is the most senior Professor in the speciality. The involvement of Surgeons from Oxford and Southampton in such an exercise would be unsatisfactory as they are in direct competition with us and their advice might not be wholly detached.

After discussion I am sure the way forward will be clear and I would assure you that all of us here wish to support and fully participate in this exercise - if only to get rid of these allegations once and for all.

Please let me know if I can be of any further help.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely.

Dr. J. Roylance
Chief Executive