

12 March 2010

*Professor Sir Bruce Keogh
NHS Medical Director*

Ms Ginette Camps-Walsh

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(via e-mail)

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Dear Ms Camps-Walsh,

Re: Treatments for fibroids

You wrote to Andy Burnham on 16th February and he has suggested that I should reply.

On behalf of colleagues, I apologise for the confusion about the respective roles of NICE and the Department of Health in dealing with your earlier letter. As you rightly pointed out, NICE's role involves clinical guidelines and appraisals while the Department is responsible for policy.

You noted the development of interventional radiology services in this country and the growing body of research and guidance about their benefits both for patients and in resource use. I share your concern to find out what needs to be done to encourage Trusts and their clinical teams to ensure greater provision where this will remedy some of the variations in patient access across the country. An expansion of interventional radiology will not only benefit the treatment of fibroids but will have important applications in obstetric and trauma haemorrhage, vascular services and many other areas.

I have asked one of the policy teams here and the National Imaging Board (led by Dr Erika Denton, consultant radiologist) to examine structural barriers to the greater adoption of interventional radiology and how these can be overcome. In your e-mail you set out what some of these are – and there are also important issues about greater awareness of research and clinical outcomes, training of staff, and local leadership.

Preliminary work on this project began last year, in partnership with two of the strategic health authorities and the Royal College of Radiologists, and is now accelerating. I have asked for a plan by later this year that will prove practical and persuasive about what needs to be done to expand services in line with the evidence (including NICE publications) about clinical outcomes and use of NHS resources.

Thank you again for writing and thank you too for your work more generally in raising awareness of the benefits of interventional radiology.

Yours sincerely,



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