

Wandsworth Health News

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Coronavirus -Special Edition 2

The Lancet says it all.

Reprinted on pages 1 and 2 of WHN is an article from ‘*The Lancet*’, the renowned weekly medical journal. It was written by the editor, Richard Horton, and published on 28 March.

It says it all about the failure of the government and NHS leaders to protect both NHS workers and the public from CV19

“When this is all over, the NHS England board should resign in their entirety.” So wrote one National Health Service (NHS) health worker last weekend. The scale of anger and frustration is unprecedented, and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is the cause. The UK Government's Contain–Delay–Mitigate–Research strategy failed. It failed, in part, because ministers didn't follow WHO's advice to “test, test, test” every suspected case. They didn't isolate and quarantine. They didn't contact trace. These basic principles of public health

and infectious disease control were ignored, for reasons that remain opaque. The UK now has a new plan—Suppress–Shield–Treat–Palliate. But this plan, agreed far too late in the course of the outbreak, has left the NHS wholly unprepared for the surge of severely and critically ill patients that will soon come. I asked NHS workers to contact me with their experiences. Their messages have been as distressing as they have been horrifying.

“It's terrifying for staff at the moment. Still no access to personal protective

equipment [PPE] or testing.” “Rigid command structures make decision making impossible.” “There's been no guidelines, it's chaos.” “I don't feel safe. I don't feel protected.” “We are literally making it up as we go along.” “It feels as if we are actively harming patients.” “We need protection and prevention.” “Total carnage.” “NHS Trusts continue to fail miserably.” “Humanitarian crisis.” “Forget lockdown—we are going into meltdown.” “When I was country director in many conflict zones, we had better preparedness.”

The Lancet-continued

“The hospitals in London are overwhelmed.” “The public and media are not aware that today we no longer live in a city with a properly functioning western health-care system.” “How will we protect our patients and staff...I am speechless. It is utterly unconscionable. How can we do this? It is criminal...NHS England was not prepared...We feel completely helpless.”

England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Jenny Harries, said on March 20, 2020: “The country has a perfectly adequate supply of PPE.” She claimed that supply pressures had now been “completely resolved”. I am sure Dr Harries believed what she said. But she was wrong and she should apologise to the thousands of health workers who still have no access to WHO-standard PPE. I receive examples daily of doctors having to assess patients with respiratory symptoms but who do so without the necessary PPE to complete their jobs safely. Health workers are challenged if they ask for face masks. Even where there is PPE, there may be no training. WHO standards are

not being met. Proper testing of masks is being omitted. Stickers with new expiry dates are being put on PPE that expired in 2016. Doctors have been forced to go to hardware stores to buy their own face masks. Patients with suspected COVID-19 are mixing with non-COVID-19 patients. The situation is so dire that staff are frequently breaking down in tears. As one physician wrote, “The utter failure of sound clinical leadership will lead to an absolute explosion of nosocomial COVID-19 infection.” Front-line staff are already contracting and dying from the disease.

The NHS has been wholly unprepared for this pandemic. It's impossible to understand why. Based on their modelling of the Wuhan outbreak of COVID-19, Joseph Wu and his colleagues wrote in The Lancet on Jan 31, 2020: “On the present trajectory, 2019-nCoV could be about to become a global epidemic...for health protection within China and internationally...preparedness plans should be readied for deployment at short notice, including securing supply chains of pharmaceuticals,

personal protective equipment, hospital supplies, and the necessary human resources to deal with the consequences of a global outbreak of this magnitude.” This warning wasn't made lightly. It should have been read by the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Executive Officer of the NHS in England, and the Chief Scientific Adviser. They had a duty to immediately put the NHS and British public on high alert. February should have been used to expand coronavirus testing capacity, ensure the distribution of WHO-approved PPE, and establish training programmes and guidelines to protect NHS staff. They didn't take any of those actions. The result has been chaos and panic across the NHS. Patients will die unnecessarily. NHS staff will die unnecessarily. It is, indeed, as one health worker wrote last week, “a national scandal”. The gravity of that scandal has yet to be understood.

What's Happening In Wandsworth ?

The warnings from *The Lancet* are certainly being replicated at our local hospital St George's.

To date, 1 April, front line staff, despite constant reassurances from the government and the hospital management, are still not being tested for CV19.

It is scandalous that staff in the NHS are daily being asked to go into work without proper protection.

Not only are they not being tested but they even have to source their own masks.

It has been reported that A&E staff at the hospital had to rely on a donation of masks from a local school.

As yet, the only hospital staff that are being tested are those that exhibit symptoms. And the main reason for this seems to be that if they tested negative for the virus they can then go back to work.

This situation has not altered in the past week.

CV19 Latest figures for Wandsworth and Merton

As of 1 April there were 339 confirmed cases of CV19 in Wandsworth and 186 in Merton

Lambeth is the worse hit London borough with 418 cases of CV19 closely followed by Southwark with 415

Clap For The NHS

Do come out and clap our brave NHS workers at every opportunity.

But clap with clout and demand that all NHS workers have adequate protection and testing.

Download the 'Clap with Clout' poster from

<https://keepournhspublic.com/>

Some advice to the Government from Allyson Pollock, the renowned health campaigner and Keep Our NHS Public activist

On 24 February there were nine confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the UK. On the same day, the World Health Organization recommended countries outside China “prioritize active, exhaustive case finding and immediate testing and isolation, painstaking contact tracing and rigorous quarantine of close contacts.”

On 22 March, when there were 5,683 confirmed UK cases, the executive director of the WHO health emergencies programme repeated the message on the BBC: “What we really need to focus on is finding those who are sick, those who have the virus, and isolate them, find their contacts and isolate them.”

Contact tracing started in the UK but stopped early in the epidemic, apparently connected to a shift from “contain” to “delay” in the government’s action plan.

The situation is treated as a single national epidemic

rather than scores of local outbreaks each at different stages, an approach that in the much less severe H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009 seriously impaired the ability of local agencies to respond in a flexible, timely, and pragmatic way.

Matters have worsened since then. Central control in England was entrenched by putting Public Health England in charge of communicable disease control, leaving directors of public health in local authorities with little scope for action.

This has been exacerbated by the decimation of public health and laboratory facilities for testing, a decrease in numbers of consultants in communicable disease control and community control teams, and swingeing local authority cuts.

So what now? WHO’s mantra of “trace, test, and treat” must be followed. It

is not too late to adopt WHO guidance. A second and third wave of the epidemic is likely. Contact tracing must recommence, using tried and tested methods updated with social media and mobile phones and adapting the manuals and guidance published by China.

The structure and capacity of our depleted healthcare system is now largely driving the response to this epidemic. It will continue to do so until services that support local communicable disease control are rebuilt and reintegrated.

Write to your local MPs, councillors, and mayors about the need to follow WHO advice

<https://www.allysonpollock.com/>

The current crisis shows just how much our NHS is needed

The Coronavirus pandemic shows just how much our NHS is needed.

Americans must look on with envy when they see our national system of healthcare working as one to overcome the current crisis .

Their fragmented insurance system which leaves 40 million Americans without cover and many with an insurance package that pays for the bare minimum.

With a Presidential election due to take place in November, the message of the Democratic contender, Bernie Sanders, no longer seems that outlandish.

His consistent call over many years for a universal health system like ours will no doubt find a much more sympathetic ears from many American voters.

While many in the US may look to Britain for lessons in health care, here the leadership of the NHS wants to Americanise our NHS.

Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive of the NHS is what one might call a revolving manager.

Before his appointment he was a UnitedHealth Group Vice-President and President and/or Chief Executive Officer of United

Health group companies 2004 –2014.

His duties at United Health included lobbying for the NHS and other European national health services to be included in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

He is a firm supporter of the break up and privatisation of the NHS.

Given his catastrophic handling of the current situation he would be sacked by any health minister worth his salt.

NHS Market-Not up to the job

As soon as the CV19 pandemic began to bite one of the first casualties was Margaret Thatcher's NHS market.

Since 1990 the NHS has been divided in two with purchasers and providers.

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) buying

services from the hospital providers. A crazy system top heavy with bureaucracy.

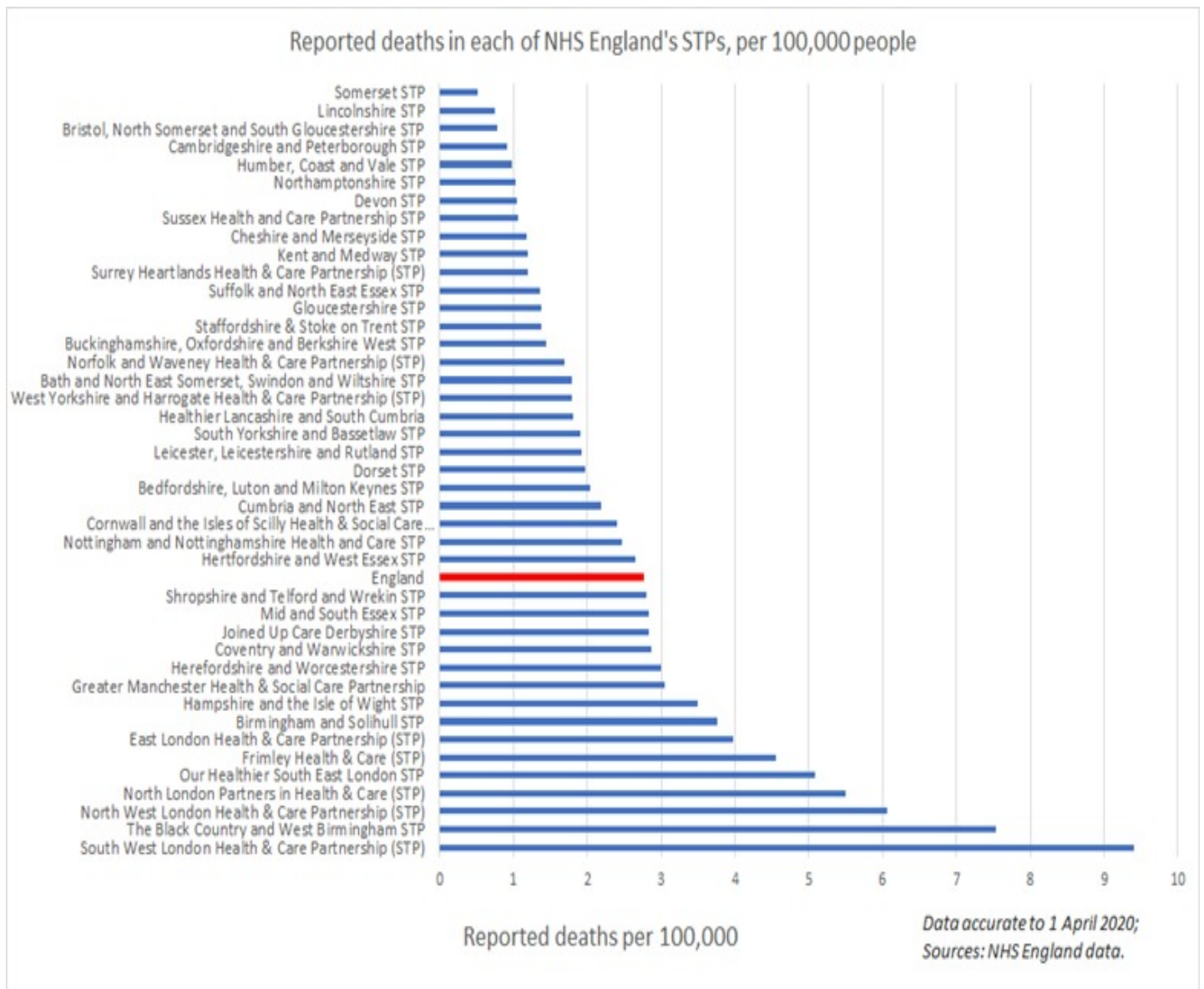
Almost unnoticed the powers of the purchasers, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, were taken over by NHS England.

A clear indication that in time of need the market

shows up its inadequacies and the NHS needs a coordinated organisation.

The demand of health campaigners that the market be abolished now has added weight.

Figures show South West London has highest recorded death rates



St George's Hospital has recorded the second highest Coronavirus deaths in the country after North West London University Trust.

Deaths at St George's as of 1 April - 64



As Children's Poet Laureate, Michael Rosen wrote this poem to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the NHS.

It is reproduced here by permission of the author.

These are the hands
 That touch us first
 Feel your head
 Find the pulse
 And make your bed.
 These are the hands
 That tap your back
 Test the skin
 Hold your arm
 Wheel the bin
 Change the bulb
 Fix the drip
 Pour the jug
 Replace your hip.
 These are the hands
 That fill the bath
 Mop the floor

Flick the switch
 Soothe the sore
 Burn the swabs
 Give us a jab
 Throw out sharps
 Design the lab.
 And these are the hands
 That stop the leaks
 Empty the pan
 Wipe the pipes
 Carry the can
 Clamp the veins
 Make the cast
 Log the dose
 And touch us last.
 These are the hands



Keep Up to date with what is happening in the NHS

Visit :<https://keepournhspublic.com/>

Wandsworth Group

Keep Our NHS Public

**Meets second Monday in the month at the PCS building by
Clapham Junction Station, 7.30pm**

All welcome

Meetings currently suspended during the Coronavirus crisis

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