



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 17, 2011

Britain's NHS Killing The Elderly

London's Telegraph newspaper has again hammered Britain's National Health Service, that model of excellent patient care leftists want the United States to adopt. This time, the paper brought the health bureaucracy to book for its "callous" treatment of the elderly in a series of articles.

[According to](#) the *Telegraph*, the NHS ombudsman was horrified at the latest scandal her office uncovered and detailed the horrors [in a report](#) on the socialist health care agency titled "Listen to patients, Speak up for change":



The findings of my investigations reveal an attitude - both personal and institutional - which fails to recognise the humanity and individuality of the people concerned and to respond to them with sensitivity, compassion and professionalism.

The reasonable expectation that an older person or their family may have of dignified, pain-free end of life care in clean surroundings in hospital is not being fulfilled. Instead, these accounts present a picture of NHS provision that is failing to meet even the most basic standards of care.

These often harrowing accounts should cause every member of NHS staff who reads this report to pause and ask themselves if any of their patients could suffer in the same way.

I know from my caseload that in many cases, the answer must be "yes."

The Telegraph [also reports](#) that the more health spending rises, the worse health care in the country seems to get.

Under Labour, health spending in England tripled to reach more than £100? billion a year. A new "NHS Constitution" set out the service's commitment to human rights, high-quality care and respect for patients and their families.

Yet the Ombudsman said her office's investigation into the cases of 10 people over 65, which took place between 2009 and last year, showed the "stark contrast" between the NHS's stated principles and the treatment patients received.

The ombudsman also wants to know how it is possible that the NHS can't provide the minimal care for patients, particularly the elderly, who are of that generation that "didn't like to make a fuss."

Horror Stories

[The "harrowing" cases include:](#)

An 82 year-old died alone because staff did not realise her husband had been waiting to see her for three hours;

A woman was not washed during 13 weeks in hospital, did not have her wound dressings



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changed and was denied food and drink;

A woman was discharged from hospital covered in bruises, soaked in urine and wearing someone else's clothes;

The life-support system of a heart attack victim was switched off despite his wife asking to leave it on while she contacted the rest of the family.

A companion article in the *Telegraph* [provides more detail](#):

A man who was diagnosed with stomach cancer, known as Mr D, was discharged from the Royal Bolton Hospital on an August Bank Holiday weekend in a process described by his daughter as a "shambles." He was left sitting in a chair, behind drawn curtains, for several hours in pain and desperate to use the lavatory. He was so dehydrated that his tongue was "like dried leather." Mr D was not given sufficient painkillers and so his family had to spend the weekend in a "frantic" and "harrowing" effort to find more, just days before he died. His daughter said the hospital treated him "as if he didn't exist..."

Mrs H, who was deaf but described as "feisty and independent," was taken to Birmingham Heartlands Hospital with acute confusion. While there she suffered serious falls but her only relative was not told, poor nursing records were kept and she lost 11lb. When she was later moved into a care home, she was found to have numerous injuries, was "soaked" with urine and was wearing someone else's clothes, held together with large paper clips. Her own belongings appeared to have been lost. Her niece said Mrs H, who died in August, was left "totally alone and abandoned."

Even worse, [reported the Telegraph](#) in yet another scathing article, no one in the NHS was disciplined for incompetence or neglect.

And these cases of mistreating the elderly are hardly unique. The ombudsman's [report says](#) 20 percent of 9,000 complaints filed with her office concerned the statist health empire's care for the elderly.

When Will It Stop

Unsurprisingly, the head of Britain's Patient Association, [is aghast](#). The headline over Katherine Murphy's piece in *Telegraph* asks, "How many times do we need to hear it? How many reports do we have to have before anything will change and patients will stop suffering. "

[Murphy wrote](#):

... that the NHS is failing our most vulnerable patients and failing to provide them with even the basics of care.

If we haven't got these basics of care sorted by now, how will the NHS cope as it faces the pressure of having to find £20 billion of savings by 2014 at the same time as undergoing a massive restructure?

Will elderly patients suffer further as we are left with fewer resources and fewer nurses on our wards? ...

The situation is completely unacceptable. The NHS should always get these basic patient needs right. There isn't an on cost to this - it is an entitlement that every individual has a right to.

And neglecting the elderly is hardly the only problem with NHS. Indeed, for NHS, seeing dead people,



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to quote [Cole Sear](#), is nothing unusual.

As [The New American reported](#) in September, reprising another horror story from England, 11 NHS doctors misdiagnosed a woman's stomach cancer. They found the disease way too late, and woman's cancer became inoperable. "I knew something was terribly wrong and needed help," she said, adding:

After a while, my GP told me there was nothing wrong with me and said the staff in A&E were very busy people and I shouldn't keep going there.

A doctor ... advised me to eat more bananas. Now I find out my body is riddled with tumours and the cancer is terminal.

I feel like they never gave me any chance to survive.

This raises the obvious question of why presumably intelligent people such a [Paul Krugman](#), the [Nobel Prize winning](#) columnist for the *New York Times*, would impose such a health-care system on the United States.

As the *Wall Street Journal's* [James Taranto](#) frequently and derisively observes in his long-running "[Great Moments In Socialized Medicine](#)" feature, the [former Enron advisor](#) has total faith in the NHS. [Wrote Krugman](#), "In Britain, the government itself runs the hospitals and employs the doctors. We've all heard scare stories about how that works in practice; these stories are false."

Yes. [Just ask the elderly who need care from NHS.](#)

Photo: Ambulances belonging to the National Health Service, seen outside one of London's major hospitals St Mary's, in Paddington, London: AP

Images



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