

Feature:

The NHS and the Rise of Privatisation

Launched in 1948 at Park Hospital in Manchester, the U.K has put the NHS through many twists and turns: the abolishment and reinstatement of prescription pricing, differing political parties taking their own stance on it, the constant threat of potential privatisation (in whispered tones) – the list goes on and on. However, through it all, the National Health Service’s reason for being has stayed exactly the same, so it’s definitely worth asking: what actually is the NHS? And why did it come to be?

Briefly put, the NHS allows patients to have a lot of freedom in regards to medical care, and often means that no cost needs to be paid to receive certain services. For example, visiting the local doctor’s surgery or seeing a midwife during pregnancy is absolutely free (unless private care is opted for). Now, the reason for this is simple enough; at one point in British history, most people belonged to many separate health services – all different in regards to social status, sex, age etc. – and the burden became too much for those who couldn’t afford health care. In light of this, the government sought out a ‘universal’ service that would benefit all, and thus the NHS was born. Since 1948, tax payers all over the country have been ploughing money into the Health Service, and in lieu of what the NHS set out to do (provide free healthcare to all), this is a huge success.



So, it’s time to talk about the word that seemingly has the ability to rile people up. Yes, that’s right; *Privatisation*. First of all, let it be said that this isn’t as new a concept as we all think. Patients have been paying for dental care for years, and no one batted an eyelid! However, that’s not to say there haven’t been some worrying movements in regards to the Health Service. Up until 2012, legislation meant that hospitals weren’t *allowed* to make income from private care that amounted to any more than 2%. However, legislation introduced in 2017 has allowed hospitals to average at 49% from private care income. Essentially, this tells the public that private care is certainly an up and coming way of receiving treatment. But, all this means is that in NHS hospitals, a private sector will be set up to accommodate those who are paying privately for their care. Their treatment differs only by the speed in which they are seen, but in actual fact, they are seen by exactly the same doctor as any one of us. It doesn’t seem that bad, does it?