**Old Grey Matter article for the EADT on Saturday 29th February 2020**

**More to Come...**

Now that talk of Brexit has receded (before it returns with vigour once again dressed in trade arrangements), we have to contend with actual realities, including climate change emergencies and a new threat facing us all, namely the Coronavirus – the sinister, infectious virus mutation causing flu-like symptoms that can be deadly if those catching it have other underlying health conditions, like a great number of us seniors.

As anyone in hospital would tell you, the present medical staff are doing a fantastic job, but are being stretched and stressed to the limit in hospital admissions. Patients seeking elective surgery, as well as emergency patients are having to wait longer for necessary treatment. Ambulance call outs are also suffering and with longer waits at A&E, some are having to be treated on trolleys in the corridors, which in this winter spike is becoming the norm due to lack of available beds. TV, Radio and newspapers tell the same story.

Reports tell of serious shortages of trained doctors, nurses and available hospital beds in the Health Service which has been building worse year by year over the past decade – this simply cannot be remedied in the short term by a wish list of promises – it is the result of deliberate top down policy in disengaging with nursing bursaries, a strict enforcement of holding down public sector nurses pay rates, and closing the old type of hospitals thus eliminating their beds in cost-saving measures.

Lowestoft, Southwold, Halesworth and Ditchingham lost theirs and now the number of beds and nursing staff are desperately needed to alleviate bed-blocking by patients through no fault of their own. An expensive independent report to HealthEast CCG said they would need 500 extra hospital beds to meet expected demand in the area by 2025!

Beds at present are being reserved in the much needed care home sector, thus denying further access to those seeking one for their loved one. The increase in the aged population is not a surprise, and good, prompt treatment needed for them is not rocket science. It is simply basic common sense that campaigners have been propounding for years. Government however has hidden behind the cost-cutting of the austerity years (which we are told has finished) and has been trying to pay off the National Debt by using the National Insurance Fund that was intended to support a quality state pension and NHS. You can't have it both ways, but seniors have suffered the double whammy of this policy – the worst state pension in Europe and a failing NHS – deliberate policy!

Now the next chapter is upon us with the necessary strategy being deployed for the future treatment of the expected Coronavirus emergency. I surmise this will make extra demands on the system thus pushing all other hospital treatment further back still! Dear Boris - forget the HS2 – Climate Emergency (which is not just flood containment!) and Coronavirus containment will cost real money if we are to avoid disastrous suffering!

Chris Brooks, Chair,  
Suffolk, & Anglia Region,  
Pensioners Associations (NPC).

Letter to the Editor

After Brexit talk we now have to contend with realities, including climate change emergencies and the Coronavirus that is a highly infectious virus mutation causing flu-like symptoms that can be deadly for those catching it whohave other underlying health conditions, like a great number of seniors.

As anyone in hospital recently would tell you, the present medical staff are doing a fantastic job, but are being stretched and stressed to the limit in hospital admissions. Patients seeking elective surgery, as well as emergency patients are having to wait longer for necessary treatment. Ambulance call outs are also suffering and with longer waits at A&E, some are having to be treated on trolleys in the corridors, which in this winter spike is becoming the norm due to lack of available beds. TV, Radio and newspapers tell the same story.

Official reports tell of serious shortages of trained doctors, nurses and available hospital beds in the Health Service. This has been building worse year by year over the past decade – and cannot be remedied in the short term by a wish list of promises – it is the result of deliberate top down policy in disengaging with nursing bursaries, a strict enforcement of holding down public sector nurses pay rates, and closing the old type of hospitals like at Lowestoft, Southwold, Halesworth and Ditchingham thus eliminating their beds in cost-saving measures.

Now beds and nursing staff are desperately needed to alleviate bed-blocking by patients through no fault of their own. An expensive independent report to HealthEast CCG said they would need 500 extra hospital beds to meet expected demand in the area by 2025 but common sense of campaigners told us this already and we were ignored! Government however has hidden behind the cost-cutting of the austerity years (which we are told has finished) and has been trying to pay off the National Debt by using the National Insurance Fund that was intended to support a quality state pension and NHS. You can't have it both ways, but seniors have suffered the double whammy of this policy – the worst state pension in Europe and now a failing NHS!

The next chapter is upon us with strategy being deployed for the future treatment of the developing Coronavirus emergency. This is now acknowledged to make extra demands on the system thus pushing all other hospital treatment further back still! Dear Boris - forget the HS2 £100 billions– Climate Emergency (which is not just fluvial flood containment as we know to our cost livng on the coast) and Coronavirus containment will cost real money if we are to avoid disastrous suffering!

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