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The sickening effects of social democracy [1]

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News this week that a key mental health unit in Surrey is to close [3] is yet another hallmark of a disturbing reality that plagues the National Health Service.

The principle behind the NHS is that politicians motivated by a desire to win elections will have an incentive to provide good healthcare to the public at large. This glib and simplistic and view ? typical of the naive school of thought that forged the UK's public sector culture ? overlooks a key clash of values between politics and health.

Politics is an industry that is essentially based around popularity, while healthcare is one based around necessity. It is because of this fundamental contradiction in values that the unholy nationalisation of British health has resulted in healthcare priorities being set by ill-informed politician under pressure from a largely ignorant populace. The end result is that a government's performance in health is measured in terms of how much money is spent rather than how much suffering is alleviated. Indeed, health and education must be the only industries on earth where rising costs and falling productivity are considered signs of success.

When healthcare is run by the state and driven by a desire for headlines, it is not surprising that NHS provision of mental healthcare remains shockingly low, with minimal funding and appalling disregard for the needs of the patient.

The government would be better to measure progress in new ways, for no matter how much money they say they have spent, when a priority patient still has to wait up to 3 months to see a psychiatrist it is time to start asking how many vulnerable souls have been allowed to fade from lack of available help.

It is unlikely that any government will be able to prioritise such 'unexciting' areas whilst still keeping up the required level of media-hype to stay popular, so perhaps it is time to consider the ultimate humbling of the NHS ? to acknowledge that the present model reeks of failure and that it is time to try something new.

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