

Should The NHS Be Privatized?

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The post-war labor government of the United Kingdom was responsible for initiating the National Health Service (NHS) back in 1948. The NHS initiative aimed to bring together hospitals, clinicians, pharmacists, and nurses under one organization. The goal of the health service is to provide and offer free public medical care using general taxation. Ever since then, accessing medical care in public hospitals has been free, and it has also been an issue defining the United Kingdom's politics. However, over the years, it has received critiques as well as attacks from the public, who fully depend upon and cherish the initiative. According to the public, the government is slowly but gradually undermining the healthcare system that many people within the country rely on. This has become a challenging factor for the sixty-five years the initiative has been in existence, and in order to overcome this challenge, there has been debate countrywide discussing whether the NHS should be privatized. This issue of privatization has brought about a lot of discussions, as some argue that doing so will help open up the NHS services to a core private competition. Others argue that privatization can only be applied if the British system is ready to dismantle the NHS entirely and begin adopting the US insurance system. The core objective of this paper is to try to answer what many people ask: Should the NHS be privatized?

Privatization Of NHS

The term privatization refers to the transfer of services from public ownership and control to a private one. Initially, privatization in the country was conducted through a process that entailed selling public assets and services through shares to a private owner. The private owners end up owning the services while generating profits similar to any other private organization. The concept of having the National Health Service privatized has raised eyebrows across the country as stakeholders argue that doing this will lose the initial meaning as to why the initiative was formed, while others say that doing this is the only way the NHS can be managed. The NHS system offers its services to England as well as the four UK NHS hospitals. The initiative is the oldest and biggest single organization globally that deals with the health care system. The initiative was initially formed under the idea that all citizens ought to access a good healthcare system regardless of their status in society. According to a review by the NHS, more than sixty million persons in England alone receive free health services, and every hour, more than one million citizens are served. From these statistics, it is clear that the general public is really heavily involved in this initiative.

The Economic Impact Of Privatization Of NHS

By transferring the NHS to the private sector, the level of efficiency is bound to increase in the

management of healthcare services. For quite some time, enhanced efficiency has played a crucial role in supporting the privatization of the NHS. As is known the private sector is known for focusing on increasing its profit margins while reducing the cost of operations incurred. The profit-making urge is always driven by concern and the need to compensate the stakeholders as well as investors who put their resources into private ventures with the hope of obtaining profits after a period of time. With this in mind, managers, as well as other parties, end up formulating plans and strategies that will help achieve the venture's financial goals, which, in this case, is time-bound. If NHS was turned over to the private sector, the formulation of these approaches would help enhance the entire healthcare system not only for monetary goals but also to improve the quality being offered. On the contrary, organizations overrun by the government never share their profits with any stakeholders or investors and are thus reluctant to formulate strategies that will push the venture to the next level. (Department of Health and Social Care, 2023)

However, this behavior of the private sector focusing more on making profits can affect how citizens receive healthcare. By privatizing NHS, profits will be prioritized over the service being delivered. In many instances, private organizations have been seen to run for stakeholders and put profit margins first, and in this case, healthcare disregards the patient. As the private sector aims to increase its profit margins more, it ends up overcharging its clients compared to public organizations. This is the core reason why people opt to go to public hospitals, which are cheaper than private hospitals. There have been cases of patients dying while in private hospitals as they do not have enough funds to handle their treatment. Pollock argues that privatizing the NHS will end up impeding the quality of service being offered and increase the number of patient deaths due to increased hospitalization fees. This clearly shows that privatizing the National Health Service will not end up removing ineffectiveness and money wastage, as many people believe, since the NHS is a cost-effective health organization by itself. Over the years, NHS has been able to operate and reduce the number of patient deaths in the most cost-effective way as it focuses more on the quality of services and not on the profits made.

Social Impacts

Privatizing the NHS will not only affect the economic sector but also the social sector. One of the advantages of making the National Health Service a private health system is that society will gain effective patient choices and have somebody to hold accountable in case something wrong happens during treatment or receives poor treatment. Since there are other private organizations/hospitals that offer similar services, it becomes easier for a patient to hold a hospital accountable in an instance where one's human rights are violated. Haldenby argues that competition puts the patient at the center of the NHS, and thus, more choices are offered to the patient. As a result, the patient will end up knowing how much to pay for the service cost as he/she is the one who chooses the service to be provided. Thus a patient's decision will majorly focus more on the quality of services than the cost incurred and this will encourage better care which ends up benefiting society. (The King's Fund, 2021)

Though many people argue that privatizing NHS will result in an increase in better patient choice and better care, this might not often be accurate as it will result in the provision of poor services to the community. It is known that private hospitals reward their stakeholders as they are private ventures. To do this, they end up cutting corners, prioritizing profits, or even under-investing in the general public services with the intention of increasing their profits. Moreover, private hospitals have commercially confident agreements, meaning that information is not fully shared.

Thus it becomes hard for these hospitals to partner with others a shift that would have gone a long way in improving the health services offered to society. Pollock argues that it is difficult to hold a private hospital accountable for anything, as private organizations are never democratically accountable to their client. This is what takes and denies the patients the voice to accuse private hospitals of anything while under their care. Pollock continues to argue that despite people arguing that society will benefit from the privatizing of NHS in that the patient will acquire better care, this is never the case as this move will lead to the provision of poor health services to the entire community as a whole.

In summation, this essay has offered adequate implications of how the move to privatize the NHS will affect both society and the economy at large. This strategy to privatize the National Health Service makes profit the main concern at the expense of the public's health, as many people believe. However, a group of people believes that this move will help remove ineffectiveness and reduce money wastage within the initiative. There exists abundant evidence that proves privatization does help improve the quality of services being offered to society. Due to the presence of a positive impact that offset the negative impact, this essay proposes the privatization of the National Health Service. Privatization will improve the services and conditions in healthcare facilities, and it will also help reduce the waiting list. I believe that the privatization of the NHS will play a large part in advancing the medical sector and making it better. Additionally, the political pressure will be reduced through the privatization of the NHS. Moreover, more qualified doctors will be employed, thus increasing the quality of service offered. Thus, if all citizens are to receive better healthcare services and enjoy healthcare without any stress, I believe the privatization of the NHS is the only way this can be achieved. (Nuffield Trust, 2019)

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