



Pre debate article:

Health Regulation: Public Protection or Professional Burden?

Since the News of the World broke the scandal of care at Ely Hospital in 1967 and the subsequent public inquiry there has been an increasing move away from trusting the professionals with the protection of people receiving healthcare and towards a greater sense of transparent accountability through increased regulation.

For individual practitioners this has meant registration with the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council or the Health and Care Professions Council. In the past this was a single event (unless a fitness to practise query was raised) but for the GMC and NMC it is dependent on revalidation at regular intervals with a requirement for evidence of continuing competence from third parties. In addition to individual registration, following the 2001 report of the public inquiry in the scandal

in paediatric cardiac surgery in Bristol, a scheme to regulate the clinical quality of NHS organisations was introduced (now undertaken by the Care Quality Commission).

But is regulation protecting the public? The families of people who died at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust would say that the Commission for Healthcare Improvement did little to protect them and the families of babies who died at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust remain frustrated by the lack of action against individual midwives. And what is the cost to practitioners and providers? Many have suggested that older nurses and midwives will simply retire rather than undertake what they perceive to be the bureaucratic burden of revalidation. NHS Trusts have diverted funds from direct care to preparing and managing Care Quality Commission inspections and yet only a minority are rated as outstanding and some think that

the investment offers a poor return.

At this event, the Chief Executive of the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the former Chief Executive of the Royal College of Nursing will debate the advantages and disadvantages of regulation and what an effective health regulation portfolio might look like.

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