



The collapse of Britain's National Health Service, the crown jewel of socialized healthcare

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Great Britain's National Health Service, which is meant to provide “free” universal healthcare , is collapsing under the strain of long wait times, hidden data, and excess deaths.

Long held up as the crown jewel of “ socialized healthcare,” the world’s largest government-run system is unraveling.

The crisis has led to a surge in excess deaths that has outlasted the coronavirus pandemic, with ambulance and emergency room delays linked to hundreds of deaths each week, leaked internal data suggest . Hospitals already near capacity last fall could not keep pace as the winter flu season took hold.

After waiting hours for medical attention, patients are evaluated in ambulances, waiting rooms, or hallways, while figures show tens of thousands of people spending 12 hours or more on hospital gurneys after being admitted to the emergency department.

One NHS worker at a hospital in Liverpool likened the situation to “a war zone,” according to CNN.

“You see the kind of shortages, weight and burnout, and deprivation that we're seeing right now, and there's no amount of money that is going to solve this problem,” Michael Cannon, director of healthcare policy studies at the Cato Institute, told the *Washington Examiner*. “There's no bureaucrats smart enough to send the money where it needs to go.”

At home, some warn that a push to introduce “public option” healthcare or a federal “single-payer” system could drive the country toward increasingly lethal outcomes.

While President Joe Biden has claimed to support a public option that would compete with private insurers, growing numbers of Democrats have endorsed single-payer legislation.

Over half of House Democrats sponsored legislation during the last Congress to expand Medicare in their push for a single-payer healthcare system.

“Bernie Sanders will point to the U.S. Medicare program as the model he wants to use — the Medicare program that avoids the sort of shortages we see in the NHS only by spending obscene amounts of money,” Cannon said. “If you look at President Biden’s budget, you’ll see that we can’t afford it.”

"When you soak up those resources to spend on wasteful medical care, you're taking bread out of the mouths of low-income families and making it harder for them to afford medical care and harder for them to afford adequate housing and to live in an area where they can get a decent education," he added. "All these things have an impact on health. And so you're not promoting health by promoting wasteful Medicare spending.”

Still, some government-run healthcare options produce even worse outcomes.

After a series of leaks revealed emergency waiting room times up to five times higher than the publicly available figures, the NHS promised to begin making the “hidden” data available.

British Health Secretary Steve Barclay said the NHS would publish the “real” number beginning in April in an effort to improve “transparency.”

“Too much of the debate about [accident and emergency] and ambulance services is based on anecdotal evidence,” Barclay wrote in an op-ed for the *Telegraph*. “I want NHS managers and the wider public to have access to the same facts from the front line, starting with publishing the number of 12-hour waits from the time of arrival in A&E from April.”

Public data in December showed 50,000 people waited 12 hours to be seen after being admitted to the emergency room. The true figure was 50,000 a week, according to leaked internal data obtained by the *Independent*, a British newspaper.

Deaths linked to the long wait for emergency treatment reached as many as 500 per week in October last year, the outlet reported . More than 30,000 patients a week were waiting 12 hours or more for treatment at the time.

People waiting for an ambulance after suffering a heart attack face an average wait time of 90 minutes , according to the *Telegraph*. Some wait more than one and a half times that.

A recent ambulance strike prompted the head of the NHS Confederation, an association representing NHS groups, to warn they “cannot guarantee patient safety.”

On the eve of a recent ambulance strike, the head of an association representing NHS groups warned in a letter to British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of healthcare leaders’ concerns that they “cannot guarantee patient safety.”

Pressure has mounted on Sunak to fix the system as the government announced new spending and a plan to review its practices.

Critics have questioned Sunak's commitment to the task, pressing the prime minister to reveal whether he relies on the system for himself and his family. Despite the dangerous outcomes shown in recent months, past prime ministers have praised the NHS's services, with former Prime Minister Boris Johnson claiming it saved his life when he caught the coronavirus.

By contrast, Sunak repeatedly declined to say whether he relies on the NHS or receives private medical care, calling healthcare "a personal choice" that was "not really relevant."

Days later, a spokeswoman for the prime minister told the BBC that the prime minister was registered with an NHS doctor and did not have private coverage, though she said she would "not get into timelines."