



Scrap NHS 111, and “strangle at birth” any similar proposals, say GPs

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GPs have called for the NHS 111 telephone service to be scrapped. Delegates at the BMA’s conference of local medical committees in London on Thursday 21 May voted in favour of a motion calling for the non-emergency telephone helpline to be scrapped. NHS 111 was launched in 2013 and has been blamed for increasing waiting times in emergency care.¹

Proposing the motion, Sue Roberts, chair of Somerset LMC, said, “NHS 111 doesn’t work. Despite evidence to the contrary the government insists on holding on to this shipwreck of a triage system. For example, it is meant to, in its own words, ‘be fast, easy and free.’ Well, it isn’t fast, it isn’t easy, and there is a lot of money being spent on a service that should be scrapped.”

Roberts added, “The idea, again in their own words, that ‘highly trained advisers immediately direct you to the best medical care,’ is laughable. The trained advisers are non-clinical; they are using an adopted clinical decision support system which results in a risk averse triage system.”

Roberts said that since the introduction of NHS 111 referrals to general practice and hospital accident and emergency

departments had hugely increased, while self care had declined. She added, “Easy, quick: no. So why don’t we just scrap NHS 111 and do it a better way?”

Fay Wilson, a member of the BMA’s General Practitioners Committee, spoke in favour of the motion. She said, “Like communism, NHS 111 is a great idea but disappointing in practice.”

Sian Whye, from Buckinghamshire LMC, added, “NHS 111 in its present form should be scrapped and any other proposed forms strangled at birth. Repatriate the vast sums of money wasted on this folly back to grassroots general practitioners and out-of-hours providers.”

1 Iacobucci G. Waits for emergency care are worst for 10 years, figures show. *BMJ* 2015;350:h66.

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