



NEWS

NHS AT 70

What is the greatest achievement of the NHS?

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When the NHS launched on 5 July 1948 its mastermind Aneurin Bevan told the professionals at its heart “to use your skills and judgment without hindrance.” At the time there were shortages of doctors and nurses, just as there are now. Nevertheless, the NHS has won an admiring audience the world over, and its endurance over 70 years of reform and challenge should be celebrated.

But what is the greatest achievement of the NHS? The one thing about the NHS that makes us most proud? Is it the elimination of polio in the UK, the world’s first IVF baby, the success of smoking cessation clinics and cancer screening services, or the commitment to general practice at the heart of the world’s most cost effective healthcare system? Or simply the fact of its survival, as a health service based on need and free at the point of delivery?

Does the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence deserve the “greatest” accolade? Or should that go to performance targets that brought down waiting lists for treatment and surgery, or to scrutiny of GP prescriptions to reduce wastefulness, overtreatment, and variation in practice? Or perhaps it is the “national” in the NHS that we should celebrate

most, because it allows researchers access to millions of patient records to answer the myriad of questions that make medicine attractive to creative and scientific minds alike.

When *The BMJ* had a major relaunch in 2007 it asked its readers to vote for the most important medical milestone since the journal was first published in 1840. Of 15 contenders from across medical science and public health (bmj.com/content/medical-milestones), sanitation won in a poll that attracted more than 11 000 votes.

Now we would like you to turn your minds to the past 70 years and tell us, in no more than 100 words, what you think is the NHS’s most important achievement. You have until 28 April to make your nominations (<http://bit.ly/2GAxtiT>). As with the 2007 milestones, we will then seek champions for the most popular achievements before putting them to a vote. The results will be announced in time for NHS’s 70th anniversary in July.

Have your say

Say what you think is the NHS’s greatest achievement of the past 70 years. Fill in the form at <http://bit.ly/2GAxtiT>.