WORST CASES OF PATIENT CARE

Patients Association aims at helping to improve and support the NHS

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The standfirst to McCartney’s Medicine and the media article correctly highlights the lack of balance in much of the wider media. But her main criticism is of the Patients Association. As so often happens, the messenger is attacked while the importance of the message is belittled.

The purpose of the Patients Association is to put forward the patients’ comments and concerns that we hear directly from them but also through our UK-wide volunteers. We also hear from health professionals. Patients’ concerns have grown—exponentially so recently—to the point that any government or national organisation ignores them at their peril.

McCartney is critical of how our charity is funded, particularly the funding from our corporate partners who respect the value of our work. We also get funding from members and grant giving bodies, which she doesn’t mention.

We are transparent about funding. All of our corporate supporters sign a principle of understanding that they have no influence on our activities. They give us small amounts of money to help us to function efficiently. These funds pay for our small but dedicated staff, without whom we would founder, as applies to the volunteer only patient organisations proposed by the government.

The Patients Association is independent of government funds, and we comment independently when anything is said about or done to the NHS. We, of course, also work closely with the NHS to help it to improve. We are able to do so especially when local NHS trusts appreciate the importance of the patient’s voice and invite us to help in their forward planning and service implementation. Our aim is to help to improve but also support a safe and caring NHS.

Competing interests: None declared.

1 McCartney M. Worst cases of patient care in the NHS. BMJ 2011;343:d7592. (23 November.)

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