MINI BULLETIN – 29 MARCH 2023

**Private GP appointments**. While pressure on NHS GPs has continued to grow, [private healthcare chain Spire claims](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.independent.co.uk%2Fnews%2Fhealth%2Fpatients-paying-gp-appointments-b2293588.html&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cf03effd489294aa0093908db30635233%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638156975356171555%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=GL9tkz5SHThBLapaZN%2FvnyUosTe%2FtOW45n6ffxfEyx8%3D&reserved=0) there has been a “surge” of patients paying for GP appointments, as reported in March in both the [Independent](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.independent.co.uk%2Fnews%2Fhealth%2Fpatients-paying-gp-appointments-b2293588.html&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cf03effd489294aa0093908db30635233%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638156975356171555%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=GL9tkz5SHThBLapaZN%2FvnyUosTe%2FtOW45n6ffxfEyx8%3D&reserved=0) and in the NHS-hating [Telegraph](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.telegraph.co.uk%2Fbusiness%2F2023%2F03%2F02%2Fdemand-private-gps-surges-nhs-buckles%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cf03effd489294aa0093908db30635233%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638156975356171555%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=DtfbYWhRD1Y6qw1Cx4kKJYX5RU8%2BFBWYqZO5%2FhOX3R0%3D&reserved=0).

But Spire’s “surge” seems to have been from a very low base indeed. Spire says numbers of appointments with their 125 private GPs leapt from just 23,000 in 2021 … to a new peak of just 32,000 last year.

That is an increase of almost 40%, which sounds impressive … until you realise the new peak is only 9,000 more appointments, and averages just 615 appointments per week – or an average of just over 5 appointments per Spire GP per week. And even at the claimed 25 minutes per private appointment this would keep each private GP busy for just over two hours a week.

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All Pharmacies must, by law, accept **unwanted medicines** from patients for disposal. However, the Department of Health does not promote the reuse of medicines returned from patients.

Where medicines have left a Pharmacy, it is not possible to assure the quality of returned medicines on physical inspection alone.

When medicines are returned from patients’ homes, there is no way of guaranteeing that the medicines have been stored or handled appropriately. This could affect patient safety.

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[Neil O'Brien**-** The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health and Social Care](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theyworkforyou.com%2Fmp%2F%3Fp%3D25679&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cf03effd489294aa0093908db30635233%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638156975356171555%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Mw6xT5%2BQho2isKU7s%2BuGF0YedHiMVow9hxDky9GoKEg%3D&reserved=0)

“The range of options for people to **self-refer** will streamline access to more services for patients and reduce the need for a General Practitioner (GP) appointment where this is not clinically necessary.

Integrated Care Boards will work with local people, GPs, and other stakeholders to ensure they have the relevant information to support self-referral.”

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| **GPs were left ‘psychologically distressed and overwhelmed’** by working through the COVID-19 Pandemic and need more support to remain in the workforce, a study has warned.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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| **More than three quarters of GPs and Practice Managers back industrial action** - with many ready to deliver emergency services only or shut Practices temporarily, according to an LMC poll carried out as the BMA prepares to ballot the profession.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**"BUPA has announced that it will close, sell, or merge 85 Dental Practices** across the UK, including many that provide NHS dentistry. BUPA has cited the NHS contract model, increased operating costs, and the difficulty in recruiting staff as reasons for the closures.

This is a serious problem for NHS dentistry in the UK. If you are a patient of a BUPA Practice that is closing, selling, or merging, you can contact the British Dental Association for advice at advice.enquiries@bda.org."

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| **Public satisfaction with the NHS** has slumped to just 29% - the lowest level ever recorded - according to the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey, with GP satisfaction also slipping to a new low. |

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