



Britain's hospitals worst in Europe

EXCLUSIVE by DAVID WOODING, Whitehall Editor

BRITAIN was dubbed the sick man of Europe yesterday after finishing **LAST** in the EU health service league.

The verdict came in a poll of 8,000 patients in eight EU countries.

Patients thought our hospitals lag behind because they lack cash.

They complained the NHS is hampered by waiting lists, old equipment and lack of drugs.

Germans were most satisfied with their standard of treatment, followed by the French and Dutch.

Britain's position is a setback for Tony Blair, who plans to put health at the heart of his general election campaign.

Tests

EU patients were asked to measure their health services against five tests.

These included waiting times between diagnosis and treatment and being treated where they wanted. Most Britons were dissatisfied in every category.

Pollsters Populus, who conducted the survey for the Stockholm Network think-tank, called the results "a huge thumbs-down for the NHS".

The Department of Health defended the NHS saying: "Patients are getting the fastest treatment in a decade.

"We have more doctors and nurses and the spend on health by 2007

will be 9.4 per cent, well above Europe's average."

The poll comes after ministers admitted hiring an extra 35,000 managers last year but only 24,000 doctors and nurses.



Cash-starved . . . our wards