

PRESS RELEASE

For further information, contact:
Helen Disney: 07771 787071/020 7354 8888

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NHS COMES BOTTOM OF EUROPEAN SURVEY ON PATIENT SATISFACTION

Tony Blair's hopes of persuading voters that the NHS is improving before the next Election have been dealt a blow by a new poll in which Britain scores lowest on a European league table that tracks how health services in different countries perform on measures that matter most to patients.

Less than one in five Britons think the NHS does well on waiting times, only a quarter of them believe it is good at treating people at a time and place to suit them and less than a third say it does a good job at using the latest drugs and technology to treat people.

Despite Government boasts about record spending on the NHS, two-thirds of Britons still think the Health Service has too little money and almost as many believe that other countries' health systems have more money to spend. British people are also more likely to put their own quality of care ahead of what is available for everyone else than any of their neighbours.

The survey, carried out by Populus for the Stockholm Network, covers 8,000 people in 8 EU countries.

Other key findings reveal:

- ◆ Three quarters of Britons don't trust politicians to give reliable information about how the NHS is performing
- ◆ Two-thirds of British pensioners said they were willing to be treated abroad, more than in any other country. Overall people in Britain are twice as likely to say they would travel for treatment as the French.
- ◆ Nearly two-thirds of Britons think that other countries' health services are generally better than theirs.
- ◆ A greater share of Britons believe that extra money for health should come from higher personal taxation than in other countries
- ◆ Three in five Britons (60%) say that healthcare will get worse over the next decade in the absence of reform, ranging from 48% of 15-24 year olds to 68% of those aged 35 to 64. 41% of those earning less than £5,000 a year believe this, rising to 68% of people earning over £30,000.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

- *Impatient for Change* by Helen Disney (ed.) will be published by the Stockholm Network on 1 June, priced £12. The Stockholm Network is a unique service organisation for Europe's market-oriented think tanks and thinkers.
- Populus conducts monthly polls for *The Times* among other clients. It interviewed 1000 people representative of age, gender and region in each of the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden over the phone between 26 January & 22 February 2004.