HEALTH + WELFARE

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STOCKHOLM NETWORK MEDIA BRIEFING

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For immediate release

Patients dying to save 'NHS founding principles'

The Stockholm Network supports Daniel Finkelstein's comment in today's *Times* newspaper ('A tragic tale of Sootynomics', 16.01.08). Preventing patients from purchasing additional treatment, in the name of equality is having 'disastrous consequences'.

In particular allowing patients to top-up their government funded healthcare provision would allow patients the freedom to overcome the arbitrary decisions of the drug rationing body NICE, which is charged with ruling whether drugs and life-saving treatments represent value for money.

Detailed Stockholm Network studies into the rationale and behavior of NICE conclude that more and more often these decisions are being reached on the basis of the need to contain rising healthcare expenditure. The recent case of patients being denied the life-saving cancer drug Avastin on the grounds that it is not 'cost-effective' is just one example of this trend.

> "It is absurd to believe that something as complex as a health system can be run by pigeonholing all treatments as either 'cost-effective' or 'not cost-effective'," says Kristian Niemietz, the Stockholm Network's Health and Welfare researcher and co-author of the study.
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> "Patients should be given the maximum amount of flexibility. This includes top-up payments, top-up insurance, and a much greater diversity in the funding and provision of health care. These measures would bring significant healthcare benefits for the patient and ease cost pressures on the health service."

To view the executive summary of the study, please go to:
http://www.stockholm-network.org/downloads/publications/ExecSummHTA3.pdf.

To view the complete study, please go to:
http://www.stockholm-network.org/downloads/publications/HTA3_2.pdf

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Notes to Editors:

The Stockholm Network is the leading pan-European think tank. It offers a unique network of 130 + market-oriented think tanks across Europe providing access to the best European policy thinking.

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