

Demanding a passport for health care creates a new tax ...

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The [Guardian reports this morning](#) that:

Patients could be told to bring two forms of identification including a passport to hospital to prove they are eligible for free treatment under new rules to stop so-called health tourism.

The most senior official in the Department of Health told MPs on Monday that he was looking at making hospitals check patients' papers to find out whether they should be paying, a proposal he admitted was "controversial".

I think this is more than controversial. I would suggest it is utterly unreasonable. First that is because many people do not have, and have no reason to have, a passport. I see no reason why they should be put through the stress of securing one. And yes, it is stressful: the rules on who may and may not sign passport photos for identification purposes are deeply socially discriminatory and elitist and are a real barrier for many. If identity has to be proved then a passport is not the way to do it.

Second, to require a passport that is not required for any other reason to secure HNS treatment is to impose a new tax on access to the NHS. I know there will be those who will suggest that £72.50 is a trifling sum. When half the country has savings of less than £100 I beg to differ. This is a new tax on healthcare that is wholly unacceptable and creates the real prospect that some will be denied the essential care they need on the grounds of being unable to secure a passport they do not otherwise need on the grounds of not knowing anyone of the right social status to confirm their identity or of cost.

If you want a symbol of an uncaring society at class warfare with itself then this proposal is it.