

Wes Streeting's dreams are going to be shattered

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I have published this video this morning. In it I argue that it seems as if Wes Streeting's dream for the NHS is that it be a low-cost, semi-automated, significantly privatised provider of healthcare to consumers – which is what he thinks we all are. That dream is going to be shattered by a sugar and ultra-processed food healthcare crisis and the wave of litigation that is going to hit the NHS as a result of Streeting's plan to use under-trained staff.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJVpIhC-too>

The audio version of this video is here:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=k69hm-164e69d-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=60a0c8&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

The transcript is:

Wes Streeting's dreams for the NHS are going to be shattered very soon after he arrives in office.

Wes Streeting has for some time been the shadow Secretary of State for Health on behalf of the Labour Party and I've little doubt that Keir Starmer will give him the real job the moment that he gets into office.

But Wes Streeting is a seriously misguided man. He believes that he's taking on this role for the purpose of delivering increased privatisation in the NHS. He's also taking it on, frankly, to take on the staff of the NHS who he thinks are pretty unproductive and

who he believes should be working the way that happens in Singapore, which is a very different society indeed.

His dream is going to be shattered for a number of reasons.

One is because of the rise of demand for the NHS. We have a massive problem with ill-health in the UK, which is exploding, not in the way that it did under COVID, but nonetheless, absolutely extraordinarily.

Type 2 diabetes is the most obvious sign of this, and the cause is very simple. It's excess sugar. Sugar is the threat to the well-being of the NHS, and it is being supplied to people by the ultra-processed food industry, which is out of control, and creates foodstuffs which are intended to induce an addiction towards those foodstuffs.

They quite literally provide a stimulus to the parts of the brain that says just after you've eaten that you're hungry again and therefore can you have some more food and so you eat again, and the consequence is obesity and then type 2 diabetes.

So, his idea that he can contain the cost of the NHS within its existing budgets and supply the services that we want by greater involvement of the private sector on some of the routine activities that it undertakes is absurd and it's going to go wrong.

So, in that sense, Wes Streeting's belief that he's going to be delivering some ultra-smooth private sector NHS is going to be shattered by the reality of ill health in this country.

But there's another problem that he's going to have.

The current government has begun the process of employing non-fully trained staff to undertake roles in the NHS. We have nursing assistants who are doing the roles of nurses and we have physician assistants who are undertaking the roles of doctors.

But they're not the real thing. They are not trained in the tasks that doctors and nurses undertake. And in the case of doctors in particular, where some of these physician assistants are doing things like operations, the lack of knowledge is going to be absolutely threatening to the future of the NHS because of the litigation that is going to follow when things go wrong, as surely it will.

The job of a doctor is to manage complex risk. We are complex. We create risk every time we sit in front of a doctor and cannot adequately describe our symptoms of ill health. Which, of course, most of us can't. The doctor has to use their skill of us as a whole person to work out what might be going on.

Doing so, they are not looking at techniques that they can apply to deliver surgery or to prescribe a drug. What they're looking at is a complex system that has a fault in it, which they're trying to identify as the cause. Now that's a totally different task from

learning about how to, for example, do an operation for a cataract.

That's a very specific skill. But you've got to, first of all, work out that that is the right thing to do. And these people are not being trained to do that.

Worse, If somebody does an operation for a cataract and doesn't realise that that is the operation that is not needed because there's something much more complex going on in the eye, they could cause harm, and I think they will cause harm, and I think most doctors realise that.

And this move towards untrained people, or only partly trained people, I should say, inside the NHS, who cannot do complex risk management because they're not trained in it, is deeply dangerous to Wes Streeting's image of what he wants to deliver in the NHS because we already have tens of billions of pounds sitting on the government's balance sheet in terms of provisions for litigation costs from people who are claiming from the government for damages caused by botched NHS procedures.

That sum will go out of control if Wes Streeting gets his way to substitute yet more doctors and nurses with these partly-trained people.

We know already there are lots of doctors who cannot find employment in the UK. There's no shortage of GPs. They're just unemployed right now.

And we know already that nurses finishing their periods of qualification training are not getting jobs in hospitals because nursing assistants are being employed.

Instead, we're getting a dumbed-down NHS, and Wes Streeting is dedicated to that.

His image of the NHS is deeply flawed.

His dream needs to be shattered as soon as possible, because we need a proper NHS, with properly trained people, who understand the complex beings that we are, and our needs, if we are all to get the health service that we need, which is nothing like the thing that Wes Streeting wants to deliver to us.