

## Contributors

**Julian Tudor Hart**  
julian@tudorhart.freemove.co.uk

**Dougal Jeffries** is a GP in the Scilly Isles.  
dougal6@googlemail.com

**Nigel de Kare-Silver** is associate director for Assessment, the London Deanery.  
nigel.dekaresilver@londondeanery.ac.uk

**Edzard Ernst** is professor of Complementary Medicine at the Peninsula Medical School, University of Exeter. He studied medicine in Vienna.  
eernst@pms.ac.uk

**Paul Hodgkin** is Chief Executive of Patient Opinion and a GP.  
Paul.Hodgkin@patientopinion.org.uk

**Kim Daniels** is a lawyer with 15 years experience pursuing claimant's cases against the NHS.

**St John Livesey** is a GP.

**Max Inwood** is a GP in a leafy part of Edinburgh.  
maxwell.inwood@blueyonder.co.uk

In 1866 American missionaries decided that the astonishingly polytheistic Lebanon needed another subset of Christianity. Dr Daniel Bliss was asked to found the Syrian Protestant College (and medical college). This became the American University of Beirut in 1920 and still flourishes despite occasional attention from the Israeli air force.

**Bassem Saab and Jumana Antoun** are professor and senior lecturer in the department of family medicine.  
brsaab@aub.edu.lb  
ja46@aub.edu.lb

**Iona Heath** is President of the RCGP.  
iona.heath22@yahoo.co.uk

**Mike Fitzpatrick**  
fitz@easynet.co.uk

**John Gillies** is a GP in Selkirk. He wants QOF to be a theme at this autumn's RCGP conference.  
j.gillies@rural-health.ac.uk

**Neil A Hedger** is a consultant renal physician at Portsmouth Hospitals Trust Wessex Renal & Transplant Unit.  
neil.hedger@ntlworld.com

**John Frey** is professor of Family Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, Wisconsin.  
John.Frey@FAMMED.WISC.EDU  
http://www.fammed.wisc.edu

**James Willis**  
jarwillis@googlemail.com

**Anthony Grayling** is professor, School of Philosophy, Birkbeck, University of London. He writes and broadcasts universally.  
a.grayling@bbk.ac.uk

**Saul Miller**  
saulmiller@me.com

# Saul Miller

## Text of a speech to be delivered from my consulting room chair

[Cue National Anthem].

[Cue glossy consultation pack entitled *The New NHS — Leaner and Meaner*, signifying that the decisions are already made].

*'In the time of the Brown Hole, it is our patriotic duty to allow Blighty to forge its recovery on the anvil of Reduced Costs. Indeed, it is nigh on 2 years since our cash-strapped Primary Care Trust, bless their silken socks, unilaterally re-negotiated our contract price. "Value-for-money" they pronounced to their adoring public while, behind our gagging orders, we mouthed "mismanaged fiscal policy" and waved hurrah. Let us then steel ourselves to continue exceeding all targets despite a further lowering of incentives.*

*Our sheer professionalism, our Hippocratic ideal, will allow us to rise above the challenges of thrift and to thrive. Not for us disillusionment, nor drops in productivity: the march of progress will continue apace.'*

[Pause here for dramatic effect; Mrs Briggs continues to disrobe behind the curtain]

*'While I consider it my duty to lean hard against the gale as far as is needed, it has to be admitted there are trees, nay forests, that might easily be swept away in the hurricane bearing towards that Brown Hole without anyone missing them. The whole plantation known as Choose Or Book might easily be lost. As a recent user, I can report that the booking arrangement needed four attempts and offered no great choice.*

*The Big Idea behind Choose A Book is Free Market Competition: spare capacity in the system so that providers must give a damn whether I Choose To Book with them or not. They Do Not!*

*Given that Choose No Book is one of few visible landmarks to give a clue to the National IT Strategy's existence as a forest in its own right, perhaps the time has come to clear-fell the latter quietly and lay it down besides deadwood stamped "PFI"?'*

[Voice drops, cosy fireside-chat style]

*'Did I say Spare Capacity? Yes I did! But in straitened times? Let us ditch all*

*dabblings at an Internal Market. Private Sector Treatment Centres spring to mind here, Darzi Centres too. Is there one, somewhere, for which a genuine need exists?'*

[Voice rising now, using auriscope earpiece as mini-megaphone]

*'The whole franchising out of the NHS to profit-motivated private companies should stop too. Indeed it should! It is too much to believe they simply provide a more efficient model of provision: that is dogma that, like Karl Marx, is just wrong.'*

[Ranting like a fired-up preacher now]

*'Finally, I mention Out of Hours, the loss of responsibility for which I, like many, still grieve over. Close down NHS Direct! It never did cut demand. Swine flu has shown health helplines are at their finest when untrained operators are making difficult diagnoses and using questionable treatments. Ovarian cancer is just awaiting this approach!*

*Give me back Out of Hours! Give me my fair share of the zillions now spent on it! And a call centre! And the free flights to Germany!'*

[Mrs Briggs, re-dressed, leaves, consultation pack clutched to her breast].

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp10X483797

***'In the time of the Brown Hole, it is our patriotic duty to allow Blighty to forge its recovery on the anvil of Reduced Costs'***