

Sir

Our crisis in General Practice will need much more than money

On 12 October the Health Secretary announced initiatives to stem the growing crisis in General Practice: to train more GPs and pay new recruits a large lump sum to work in higher-risk areas.

This will not work. Even if such inducements manage shorter-term recruitment, they will fail in the crucial longer-term retention.

Why? Because General Practice has become an unattractive career choice: its institutional stresses and demands now clearly outweigh its personal and professional gratifications. This has happened over the last twenty years with successive reforms. Overall, and cumulatively, these have made General Practice more and more like a punitively and mistrustfully managed factory conveyor belt where personal contact, knowledge, understanding and judgements are displaced by institutional demands and procedures. Career abandonment is increasingly common.

Governmental demands for efficiency and reliability are understandable, but our unwise excesses of managerialism have destroyed the professional and personal heart and spirit of this profession and much welfare beyond.

More money here is short-term bait. Longer-term we need to reinstate much profession's erstwhile human sense, trust and thus satisfactions.

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