

Issued 27/4/04

Starts

A MORI report commissioned by the Federation of Independent Practitioner Organisations (FIPO) has shown that:

- **60% of consultants practicing private medicine do not believe that the new consultant contract will improve the NHS and 39% believe it will restrict their ability to treat private patients**
- **In the last five years, 72% of consultants working in the independent sector have seen their practice expenses increase by, on average, 23% (1)**
- **In a review of health insurers, WPA is seen by consultants as one of the best in the UK**

Background

The Federation of Independent Practitioner Organisations (FIPO) is an overarching body for most of the consultant speciality organisations in the private medical sector. Membership of FIPO is not open to individual consultants but only to organisations or groups. FIPO has also networked MACs (Medical Advisory Committees) from all UK independent hospitals and has opened its membership to groups of doctors working in "Chambers". FIPO is committed to the maintenance and improvement of standards in the independent sector. More information can be found at www.fipo.org

MORI Poll

In February 2004, MORI was tasked to conduct a poll (2) and to evaluate how consultants in private practice perceive private medical insurance providers and the value for money that patients obtain from their cover. Additional questions focussed on future healthcare changes in the UK in the light of the new NHS contract and the changing economic factors in private practice.

MORI POLL RESULTS

In this survey 29% of consultants had been involved in private practice for over 20 years while 74% were aged 50 years or over. The average number of NHS sessions currently worked per week was 9 with consultants also averaging 2 private sessions a week. 60% of independent practitioners believe the new Consultant Contract will not improve the NHS and 39% thought that the contract would inhibit their ability to work in the independent sector.

In terms of the economics of private practice, 70% of the consultant's private work was covered by private medical insurance, while 26% of patients were self-pay. 52% of those consultants surveyed were formal or informal members of an insurer partnership (3). However, although 88% of consultants say their practice has not undergone any fundamental change in the last five years the practice expenses of 72% of those surveyed had risen by an average of 23%.

WPA (4) was voted by Britain's independent consultants as being one of the leading health insurers for providing good value for money for policyholders, and for offering doctors clinical freedom in their treatment plans (illustrated in diagram 1). The survey further complimented WPA who achieved the joint highest agreement score for being patient-friendly and being recommended to patients.

Comments

Geoffrey Glazer Chairman of **FIPO** commented that "it is worrying that three in five consultants disagreed with the statement that *the new consultant contract will improve the NHS*, while two in five believe the Contract will restrict their ability to treat private patients. The financial aspects of private practice are becoming more difficult for consultants with rising practice expenses and fixed insurance reimbursements. This, coupled with the new NHS contract, may drive many consultants with low incomes out of independent practice. The other results from this MORI survey confirm our own separate questionnaire surveys in showing that there is little to separate the leading insurance companies although WPA does appear to be doing rather well in the consultant's opinion".

Julian Stainton, **WPA's** Chief Executive, comments: "WPA is renowned for its customer service. In March, WPA was in *"The Sunday Times Top 100 Companies in the UK to Work For"* and I am delighted that this major survey shows that the majority of independent practitioners polled, endorse WPA's brand, commitment to value for money, customer service ethos and overall quality. This is why we publish our standards of service (5). At WPA we are constantly striving to improve – however, to receive this type of endorsement from the medical industry is a huge compliment to everyone within the business".

Technical Notes:

1. Please note small base of 73
2. MORI Social Research Institute interviewed a random sample of 101 consultants practising private medicine in the UK, from 2 February to 3 March 2004 on behalf of the Federation of Independent Practitioners Organisation (FIPO). All interviews were conducted by telephone and the data have been weighted by region to the profile of consultants practising private medicine in the UK.
3. Formal members were in formal partnership with a specific insurance company or companies, while informal members had a personal fee agreement with an insurer.
4. WPA is one of the UK's leading medical insurers. With its not for profit status, its customers are at the centre of all that it does. Within the UK, it has a reputation for being the highest quality provider that is innovative and dynamic.
5. WPA's up to date Standards of Service can be found at www.wpa.org.uk/results

ENDS

Useful Contacts:

FIPO – Geoffrey Glazer (Chairman) 020 7222 0975

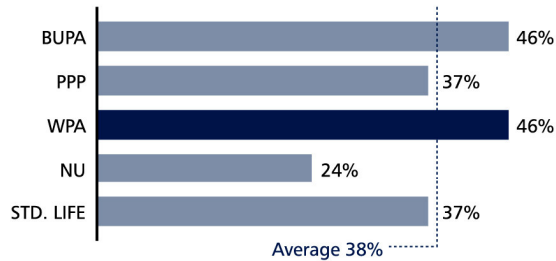
WPA – Charlie MacEwan (Head of Communications) 07771 808083

MORI - Michele Corrado or Anna Carluccio on 020 7347 3000

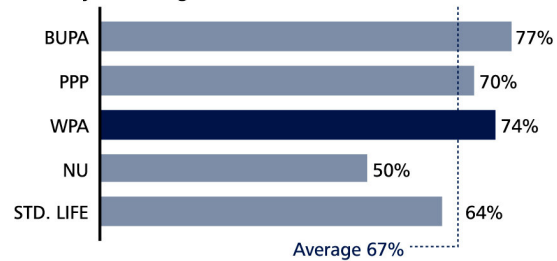
To receive a copy of the research please contact Emma Randle FIPO on 0207 222 0975 or visit MORI's website at www.mori.co.uk

Diagram 1: Independent Practitioners were asked whether they agreed, disagreed or had no opinion with six statements, the aggregate agreement scores are shown in the six graphs below:

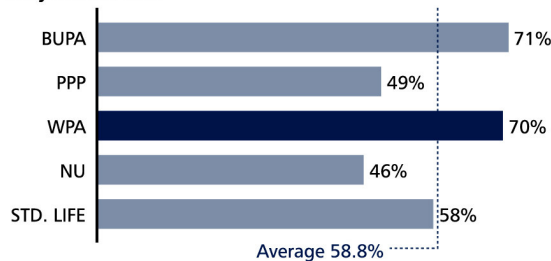
Patient friendliness



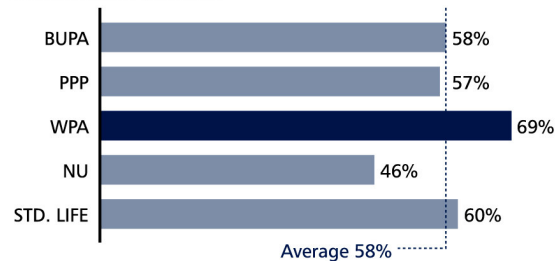
Efficiency at settling claims



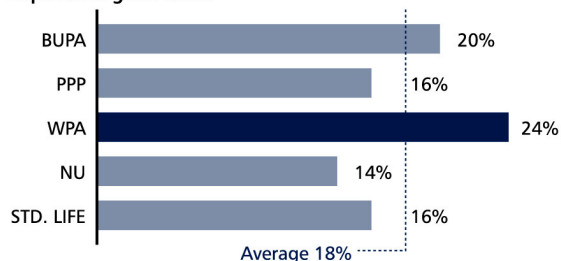
Easy to deal with



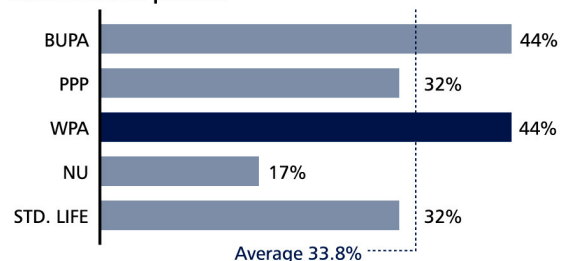
Allows clinical freedom



Represents good value



Recommend to patients



General Insurance: Consumer research
Protection: PMI
Consumer Issues: Health
Company News: Competitions
Consumer Issues: Workplace Surveys