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Patients warned of unsafe hospitals

Kat Lay Health Correspondent

GPs must warn patients of a hospital's safety rating and waiting times before they are referred for treatment, under reforms announced yesterday by the health secretary.

Jeremy Hunt is also setting up an investigation service to oversee inquiries into hospital blunders, in the same way the Air Accident Investigations Branch is used by the aviation industry.

In a sweeping keynote speech in London, Mr Hunt called for a shift in the doctor-patient relationship to "make NHS patients the most powerful patients in the world", and for increased take-up of new technology.

Mr Hunt said that, from next year, "all GPs will be asked to tell patients not just which hospitals they can be referred to but the relevant Care Quality Commission rating and waiting times as well". The ratings include patient experience, safety and quality of care, which he said would mean patients

Doctors' weekends

Spain Consultants work weekends, where they are on call for 24 hours. Pay depends on region

France All but the most senior consultants must work Sundays, and are paid 60 per cent above normal rate for this. Some consultants work up to 60 hours a week.

Italy Doctors work 38 hours and work weekend days for a day in lieu

Germany Most have to work weekends and can work seven days in a row. Shifts can be up to 12 hours long; no more than eight 12-hour shifts in two weeks

United States There are few rules regarding shift lengths, rest periods, and weekend or night work. Most hospital doctors are salaried and receive nothing extra for undesirable shifts. Standard shifts are 12 hours on, 12 hours off; they can work up to 80 hours a week.

could make "a truly informed choice about which local service is best for them". He said that from March, the UK would become the first country to publish avoidable deaths by hospital trusts.

Mr Hunt added that he had asked health officials to set up a new Independent Patient Safety Investigation Service modelled on the Air Accident

Investigation Branch. "A 'no blame' learning culture in that industry has led to dramatic reductions in both fatalities and cost — and we now need to do the same in healthcare," he said.

He also spoke about the potential for new technologies, saying that new medical devices would mean that "an ambulance arrives to pick us up not

after a heart attack but before it, as they receive a signal from a mobile phone".

Mr Hunt reiterated "frustration" with the BMA, the doctors' union, claiming it was a "roadblock to reform" as he plans for most doctors to be on seven-day contracts within five years.

Professor Jane Dacre, president of the Royal College of Physicians, said: "Patients deserve the same standard of urgent care at night and weekends as ... during normal working hours."

Mark Porter, the BMA council chairman, said: "Today's announcement is nothing more than a wholesale attack on doctors to mask the fact that for two years the government has failed to outline any concrete proposals for introducing more seven-day hospital services."

● In a response to the Francis report on whistleblowing, the Department of Health said it had plans for all staff training to include how to raise concerns.

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NHS needs a plan and better managers, says ex-M&S boss

Kat Lay

There is a chronic shortage of good leaders in the NHS, according to a review of health service management.

A long-delayed report by Lord Rose, former boss of Marks & Spencer, found "an atmosphere of mutual distrust" between doctors and managers. He said performance management of staff

was "haphazard and weak", and too often a form-filling exercise. The NHS was "drowning in bureaucracy".

"The whole organisation could and should be made more effective by the application of some commonsense tactical and strategic thinking," he said.

There was short-termism and a gulf between managers and clinical staff. He said: "A lack of cohesive leadership

will produce an organisation where relations between staff and patients are merely transactional, doggedly contractual, obsessed with data and lacking in innovation and inspiration."

Lord Rose was appointed to carry out the review last year, and delivered it in December. Before the election, there were claims it was suppressed as it was critical of the government's reforms. It

found that staff were not "fully trained or equipped" to deal with uncertainty and complexity brought about by Andrew Lansley's reforms.

The report also said that there was a lack of "one NHS vision" and a common ethos among staff. He recommended that it should establish a system of staff appraisals and a handbook summarising core values.