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BMA: dementia diagnoses are 'pointless' with no patient care

By Laura Donnelly HEALTH EDITOR

IT is "pointless" to diagnose patients with dementia when there is no help available for them, say doctors.

The profession yesterday accused ministers of caring more about "hitting targets" to drive up diagnosis rates than about ensuring that support was available for the most vulnerable.

The government drive has seen a near doubling in diagnoses in the past six years.

However, the initiative has been dogged by controversy, especially over

'As a doctor, you want to make sure giving a diagnosis is going to be of benefit to a patient'

"cash for diagnoses" schemes that gave GPs bonus payments for each patient classified with dementia.

A majority of doctors at the British Medical Association annual meeting backed a motion that called diagnosis without support meaningless.

Dr Gary Wannan, chairman of the BMA's community care committee, and a psychiatrist in central London, said: "As a doctor you feel very responsible in giving a diagnosis, and you want to make sure it's going to be of benefit. There's no point in giving someone a label, but then not being able to provide support."

◆ The BMA is to lobby the Government in favour of an "opt-out" system of organ donation. Doctors yesterday voted in favour of the move after a shift to presumed consent in Wales doubled the number of transplant organs. Three patients in need of an organ die each day.