

Hawking's example

Sir, Your correspondent (letter, Feb 12) draws attention to the very low use of tracheostomy in the UK for patients with motor neurone disease. In 2014 Professor Stephen Hawking gave a moving presentation via his voice synthesiser at a conference that I chaired. He described the decision to have a tracheostomy, which maintained his swallowing and airway for many years. When that eventually proved inadequate he had his voicebox removed and this provided him with several more years of productive life.

Although the care of a permanent tracheostomy is complex and expensive, this intervention should be considered more often as it is in other advanced countries.

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