

Pine Mackie 2
Rec 6
24/11

CEPU

THE NEW 'HEALTH REFORM GROUP'

ms

A new campaigning organisation - the Health Reform Group - will be formally launched on Monday to garner more support for the Government's health reforms.

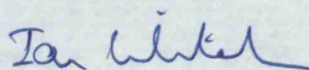
250 medical professionals (mainly doctors) have already joined the group to give added weight to the launch. Members are required to sign up to five principles and objectives - all laudable:

1. To support a publicly funded National Health Service which will continue to provide free medical care to everyone, regardless of income.
2. To achieve better understanding within the professions and the general public of the need for evolutionary change within the NHS as proposed in 'Working for Patients'.
3. To promote throughout the NHS more choice for patients, higher quality care and a wider range of services whilst accepting that resources will be finite.
4. To encourage and advise those working in the health service and Government on innovations which will make the NHS more effective.
5. To establish a forum through which those interested in developing health care services can enter into constructive dialogue with each other and the Government.

The key personalities behind the initiative are Professor Richard Lilford (Chairman), Senior Consultant Obstetrician at St James Hospital, Leeds and Dr Clive Froggett (Secretary).

The group should have a positive impact on the health debate as a counterbalance to the BMA's hostility. Richard Lilford is highly presentable, very supportive of the reforms and apolitical. And Clive Froggett should be able to maintain strong editorial control over press releases and letters to members.

The draft press release is attached.



IAN WHITEHEAD

DRAFT PRESS NOTICE

A new campaigning organization - the Health Reform Group - was launched today by health professionals committed to working within the NHS to promote the cause of reform.

Its Chairman, Professor Richard Lilford, explained why the group had been set up:

"We believe that the Government's White Paper holds the key to putting patients centre-stage. But the strong arguments in its favour simply haven't been aired. A growing number of doctors, consultants and nurses feel that they have not had the chance to take part in an informed debate. They believe that they are being denied the chance to shape reform. There has been growing pressure from within the NHS for a more constructive approach. The Health Reform Group is the result.

"We are all of us 100 per cent committed to the NHS. But we all know - as does everyone who works in the Health Service - that it needs change. We want it to offer a first-rate service right across the country. That is the best way to see off the threat of a two-tier system.

"We are certain that the White Paper reforms offer us an opportunity to make the NHS even better at caring for our patients. We would be failing in our duty to those patients if we let that opportunity slip. We are therefore determined to play an active part in driving the reform process forward."

Professor Lilford continued by saying that the Health Reform Group had set itself three main tasks:

"First, we will be talking to other health professionals to help promote reform within the NHS itself.

"Second, we will try to explain to the public why reform is needed and how "Working for Patients" will help.

"And third, we will talk to officials and Ministers at the Department of Health to make sure that the views of NHS staff are fed into the reform process."

Professor Lilford then outlined the structure of the Health Reform Group. Five working groups will be set up to work within the NHS to discuss reform and to share examples of good practice. They will concentrate on the following main issues:

- self-governing hospitals
- GP budget holding
- medical audit
- research and education
- nursing

There will be a sixth working group which will focus on the special needs of Scotland.

The lessons learned from these working groups will be passed on at national conferences - one on each of the main issues. The first will be held in Spring, 1990.

In conclusion, Professor Lilford said:

"We must never forget that the NHS is there to serve patients. It is not there for the benefit of the professional groups working within it. We should face up to change - however uncomfortable it may be for us in the short term - if it will enable us to improve patient care. The Government's proposals represent a bold start down the path of reform. We are determined to play our part in leading our fellow professionals and the general public towards a better and stronger NHS."