Towards a framework for enhancing procurement and supply chain management practice in the NHS: lessons for managers and clinicians from a synthesis of the theoretical and empirical literature

Joe Sanderson,¹* Chris Lonsdale,¹ Russell Mannion² and Tatum Matharu¹

¹Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK
²Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

*Corresponding author

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New structures and policies are being introduced in the NHS as a result of recent legislation: the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Family doctors alongside other clinicians and managers are now organised as Clinical Commissioning Groups, which are in charge of procuring health-care services from providers for patients. Procurement of health-care-related goods and services also takes place in NHS hospitals. Those doing procurement in Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS hospitals need to gain a greater understanding of how this activity is done in commercial settings to improve their skills in the NHS. This study reviews research that has been done in this area already, presents an overview of it and uses it to suggest ways that clinicians and managers in the NHS can carry out their procurement role better. It first looks at studies that explain how procurement should be done in theory and then looks at how this compares with what has been done in the NHS over its recent history. It then looks at how procurement is carried out in other places and other types of industry, and from this review suggests improvements. By looking at this previous research, the study concludes that NHS staff involved in procurement need to address different procurement situations in different ways using a portfolio approach. This means that there are choices about how health-care goods and services might be procured and that these should be made appropriately in line with the nature of what is being procured and with circumstances.
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