

Vertical integration of GP practices with acute hospitals in England and Wales: rapid evaluation

Manbinder Sidhu,¹ Jack Pollard² and Jon Sussex^{3*}

¹Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

²Health Economics Research Centre, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

³RAND Europe, Cambridge, UK

*Corresponding author: jsussex@randeurope.org

Declared competing interests of authors: none.

Published June 2022

DOI: 10.3310/TLLA3317

Plain English summary

Vertical integration of GP practices

Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2022; Vol. 10: No. 17

DOI: 10.3310/TLLA3317

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain English summary

General practices are usually run separately from hospitals. In some places in England and Wales, the NHS organisations responsible for managing hospitals are now also running local general practices. It is difficult in some areas for practices, which are small organisations, to recruit general practitioners and keep going. It is also desirable to co-ordinate general practice services with hospital care. For these reasons, it may help if the organisations managing hospitals also run general practices.

We have investigated (1) what specifically has led to hospitals and general practices being run by the same organisation (i.e. vertical integration); (2) how vertical integration is carried out; (3) the expectations of the general practitioners and NHS managers who make vertical integration happen; (4) whether or not those expectations are being fulfilled; and (5) whether or not there are any other consequences of vertical integration. To do this, we have interviewed general practitioners, NHS managers and other staff (52 people in total) at two locations in England and one location in Wales. We have also observed management meetings and reviewed documents referred to by interviewees. We intend to follow up with a further evaluation that will look more deeply into the consequences, for staff and patients, of hospitals taking over the running of general practices.

We have found that the dominant reason for hospitals to run general practices was to enable some practices that would otherwise have closed to keep going. This vertical integration has so far been successful, as these practices are increasingly able to offer patients the opportunity to consult a range of health-care professionals at the local practice – not just general practitioners, but also staff with special training to provide specific types of health care (e.g. for diabetes or for problems with joint pain). Various legal arrangements were developed in different places to enable hospitals to run general practices, including setting up an NHS-owned company and making the practices part of an existing NHS organisation.

Health and Social Care Delivery Research

ISSN 2755-0060 (Print)

ISSN 2755-0079 (Online)

Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb and NCBI Bookshelf.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

This journal was previously published as *Health Services and Delivery Research* (Volumes 1–9); ISSN 2050-4349 (print), ISSN 2050-4357 (online)

The full HSDR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hcdr. Print-on-demand copies can be purchased from the report pages of the NIHR Journals Library website: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Criteria for inclusion in the *Health and Social Care Delivery Research* journal

Reports are published in *Health and Social Care Delivery Research* (HSDR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HSDR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HSDR programme

The HSDR programme funds research to produce evidence to impact on the quality, accessibility and organisation of health and social care services. This includes evaluations of how the NHS and social care might improve delivery of services.

For more information about the HSDR programme please visit the website at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/health-and-social-care-delivery-research.htm>

This report

The research reported here is the product of an HSDR Rapid Service Evaluation Team, contracted to undertake real time evaluations of innovations and development in health and care services, which will generate evidence of national relevance. Other evaluations by the HSDR Rapid Service Evaluation Teams are available in the HSDR journal.

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HSDR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number NIHR131295. The contractual start date was in October 2018. The final report began editorial review in July 2020 and was accepted for publication in October 2020. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HSDR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, the HSDR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, the HSDR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

Copyright © 2022 Sidhu *et al.* This work was produced by Sidhu *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This is an Open Access publication distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, reproduction and adaption in any medium and for any purpose provided that it is properly attributed. See: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. For attribution the title, original author(s), the publication source – NIHR Journals Library, and the DOI of the publication must be cited.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).

BRACE: The Birmingham, RAND and Cambridge Rapid Evaluation Centre

The BRACE Rapid Evaluation Centre (National Institute for Health and Care Research Birmingham, RAND and Cambridge Evaluation Centre) is a collaboration between the Health Services Management Centre at the University of Birmingham, the independent research organisation RAND Europe, the Department of Public Health and Primary Care at the University of Cambridge, and National Voices. BRACE carries out rapid evaluations of innovations in the organisation and delivery of health and care services. Its work is guided by three overarching principles:

1. Responsiveness. Ready to scope, design, undertake and disseminate evaluation research in a manner that is timely and appropriately rapid, pushing at the boundaries of typical research timescales and approaches, and enabling innovation in evaluative practice.
2. Relevance. Working closely with patients, managers, clinicians and health care professionals, and others from health and care, in the identification, prioritisation, design, delivery and dissemination of evaluation research in a co-produced and iterative manner.
3. Rigour. All evaluation undertaken by the team is theoretically and methodologically sound, producing highly credible and timely evidence to support planning, action and practice.

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Ken Stein Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor John Powell Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK, and Professor of Digital Health Care, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, UK

Professor Andrée Le May Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HSDR, PGfAR, PHR journals) and Editor-in-Chief of HSDR, PGfAR, PHR journals

Professor Matthias Beck Professor of Management, Cork University Business School, Department of Management and Marketing, University College Cork, Ireland

Dr Tessa Crilly Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Eugenia Cronin Consultant in Public Health, Delta Public Health Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Peter Davidson Interim Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board. Consultant Advisor, School of Healthcare Enterprise and Innovation, University of Southampton, UK

Ms Tara Lamont Senior Adviser, School of Healthcare Enterprise and Innovation, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Catriona McDaid Reader in Trials, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

Professor William McGuire Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads Emeritus Professor of Wellbeing Research, University of Winchester, UK

Professor James Raftery Professor of Health Technology Assessment, School of Healthcare Enterprise and Innovation, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma Consultant Advisor, School of Healthcare Enterprise and Innovation, University of Southampton, UK

Professor Helen Roberts Professor of Child Health Research, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Palliative Care and Paediatrics Unit, Population Policy and Practice Programme, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, London, UK

Professor Jonathan Ross Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

Professor Helen Snooks Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Professor Ken Stein Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Jim Thornton Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

Please visit the website for a list of editors: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk