



PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release
4th December 2009**

Leading academics question new patient safety indicator

Leading academics, Professor Nick Black of the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Professor David Spiegelhalter, Winton Professor of Public Understanding of Risk at the University of Cambridge, have questioned the use of a new single patient safety indicator in this year's Dr Foster Hospital Guide.

Both have concerns over the way that data was used to create a single indicator for every hospital in England. Professor Spiegelhalter, whose work is referred to in the guide, said that although the mathematical techniques could be sound, the crucial factor was the choice of information used to create the indicator. He also questioned whether a single patient safety score should be created in the first place. "That is something I do feel is inappropriate and is not part of the statistical methods," he said.

Professor Nick Black has disputed the published mortality ratios which found that overall across the country they fell by 7.0%. "If that was true everybody from around the world would be flocking to Britain to find out how the NHS has produced what quite frankly would be a miracle. Most of us would be delighted if mortality fell by something like 1.0% or 2.0% a year but 7.0% should have immediately alerted Dr Foster that there was something wrong."

Jason Harries, managing director CHKS, said: “The Dr Foster Hospital Guide has for the first time used a single patient safety indicator which has led to some anomalies in the way that hospitals are ranked. We have built up experience over 20 years in measuring NHS hospital data. Like the Care Quality Commission and others we have some concerns about the guide. Publishing hospital data without giving due attention and respect to the overall context is extremely dangerous. However, performance measurement is an important part of helping hospitals deliver better and safer patient care and we support the use of transparent and meaningful measures to achieve this.”

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Notes to editors:

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For media enquires please contact:

Julian Tyndale-Biscoe, InHealth Communications, on 07882 985597 or Paul Robinson, CHKS, on 07973 234830.

Head Office: CHKS Ltd, 1 Arden Court, Arden Road, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6HN
Tel: 01789 761600 Fax: 01789 764608