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MEDICAL INNOVATION BILL POSES THREAT TO PATIENT SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Lord Saatchi's Medical Innovation Bill is to be debated in the House of Lords on 27th June. Action against Medical Accidents ('AvMA' - the charity for patient safety and justice) is warning that the Bill represents a significant threat to patient safety and justice, as well as being unnecessary. Leading doctors' organisations, regulators and patients' organisations have also deemed the Bill dangerous and unnecessary. However, the Bill has been promoted in a disingenuous and emotive way, backed by Lord Saatchi's considerable resources and access to the media and ministers.

AvMA chief executive, Peter Walsh, said:

"Parliament must not sleepwalk into this dangerous and unnecessary Bill. Contrary to the 'spin' played out in the media, the Bill is not about extreme cases where all evidence-based treatment has been exhausted - it would allow individual doctors to administer any kind of treatment provided they persuade the patient, including cosmetic treatment. The Bill does not require the support of any other expert opinion. The doctor would be free to ignore all advice and evidence. The Bill would open the door to mavericks like breast surgeon, Dr Ian Patterson, who preyed on the vulnerability of hundreds of women in the Midlands with disastrous results, and leave harmed patients with no redress.

The Bill is based on a false premise - that fear of litigation is preventing patients receiving the treatment they need. Leading doctors and lawyers agree this is not the case. For example, the BMA, NHS Litigation Authority and Medical Defence Union agree there is no evidence of this. If treatment is denied, it will be because of restrictions on funding or because the treatment would do more harm than good."

Amongst the organisations who have publicly stated their view that the Bill is unnecessary and/or dangerous are: the British Medical Association; the NHS Litigation Authority; the Medical Defence Union; the Medical Protection Society; Cancer Research UK; the General Medical Council; and the Patients Association. Robert Francis QC, author of the seminal report on the Mid Staffordshire scandal, has also strongly criticised the Bill.

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