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# PATIENTS SHUN NHS FOR CLINIC RUN BY POLISH GPs

A PRIVATE doctor's surgery run by Poles is attracting thousands of patients who have given up on the NHS. Open seven days a week, usually until 11pm, the clinic offers

By Francesca Infante and Sophie Borland

a lifeline to those forced to swamp casualty departments because their GPs no longer work out of hours. It charges £70 for a half-hour

consultation, much less than its rivals, and already has almost 6,000 Britons on its books.

Customers are welcomed into the spottless and modern centre by friendly receptionists whose motto is to 'put patients first'. Radek Przysta, who manages the

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Pensive: The Queen on a visit to the BBC yesterday, as Prince Philip underwent abdominal surgery

## Alone with her thoughts

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My Medyk clinic in West London, said he realised there was a gap in the market because NHS care was so poor.

He added: 'You have heard the stories about people going to GPs and whatever is wrong with you they give you a paracetamol and tell you to go away.

'People find it hard to get help. They want to come to one place that they know, where they know what to expect, get the treatment and from people they trust.'

'Our patients are our customers, they are the most important things for us, that is our company motto. Perhaps that is not always the same attitude with the NHS.'

Research shows that two thirds of Health Service patients have to wait more than 48 hours for a doctor's appointment and few slots are available outside the regular working week.

Out-of-hours patients are almost certain to be seen by a locum or a senior nurse and many turn to A&E departments, which are in a state of crisis as a result.

The Polish clinic, which is regulated by the Care Quality Commission, will usually refer patients to their closest hospital any scans, chemotherapy, surgery or other procedures will be funded by the NHS.

Fees for writing out prescriptions are included - but not the cost of the drugs themselves. Treatments available include a pregnancy ultrasound scan for £90 and stitches for £45.

My Medyk also offers dental surgery, varicose vein surgery, Botox, hypnotherapy, acupuncture and counselling sessions.

It has 30,000 patients on its books - five times the average for a GP surgery - and between 15 and 20 per cent are British. The only day it is not open until 11pm is Sunday, when it shuts at 6pm.

It is also cheaper than rival operators. Bupa centres offer GP services at £67.49 for a 15-minute appointment - or £225 for a full hour. Their normal surgery hours are 9.30am to 5.15pm.

One My Medyk patient, a 56-year-old civil servant called Sarah, travels ten miles from her home in North London to the Hanger Lane surgery. 'They are open incredibly long hours which suits my lifestyle', she said. 'I would recommend them to anyone, they are really friendly and professional and the costs are easily a third of what you would pay for British private care.'

'It's difficult to get GP appointments and then you're told you have to see someone else and wait more time. If it's going to take forever to get sorted on the NHS then in my opinion it's worth paying.'

Another British patient, who did not want to be named, said the care she received was 'beyond comparison' with that offered by the

NHS. She said: 'I got an appointment when it was convenient to me and that made a huge difference.'

'I needed physiotherapy and I didn't want to wait ages for an appointment. I tried the NHS but I felt I was getting nowhere because they kept sending me to people who said they couldn't help me.'

'I feel like I can trust what they tell me at My Medyk, they work to give me what I need, rather than make my need fit into a big system.'

A third, Carmel Said, signed up to the surgery's dentist after his NHS dentist removed the wrong tooth. The 63-year-old, who lives in Wembley, said: 'I'm not going back to the NHS, as long as My Medyk is there I

will be there. Frankly the service I get there is better. I've had lots of problems with NHS dentists, the last one I had didn't listen when I told him where the pain was, he thought he knew better and he ended up removing the wrong tooth.'

'I don't want to pay for treatment if I don't have to but at the same time I don't want to have problems either. They listened to me and I felt they were interested in me as a person.'

My Medyk was founded five years ago by two Polish doctors but now employs 50 staff, the majority of whom are Poles.

In December, they opened a second clinic in Ealing, also in West London, and plan to open a third in

East London soon. Roger Goss, of the campaign group Patient Concern, said: 'I'm not surprised this clinic is attracting so many patients. I know people who are having to wait three weeks to get a GP appointment.'

'At my own NHS GP you normally have to wait at least a fortnight. Patients will rarely see the same doctor twice and this is hard on the elderly or those with long-term conditions.'

The country's top GP, Dr Clare Gerada, has told MPs there were 'queues down the street' outside her own practice, which she described as 'disgraceful'.

Comment - Page 16



'People trust us': Radek Przyplis at My Medyk



Modern: A consulting room at the London clinic

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- 'Family visit' to doctor (patient plus two children).....£190
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- Injections.....£30
- Breast ultrasound.....£100
- Contraceptive coil fitted.....£300
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# How British spies are 'collecting with US to snoop on UK emails'

BRITISH spies have had access to a US government programme that monitors the emails and web activity of millions of Britons, it was claimed last night.

Secret documents published yesterday suggest the US National Security Agency has direct access to data held by internet giants including Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, Facebook, YouTube, Skype and Apple.

The documents - which appear to be slides from a training presentation for intelligence agents - suggest the agency can access email, photographs, social network information, chat records and other 'stored data' held by the companies, as part of its 'Prism' project.

They also suggest the British government's listening centre, GCHQ, has had access to the system since at least June 2010. During this period the project generated nearly 200 intelligence reports.

It is unclear whether other agencies, such as MI5 and MI6, were also involved, meaning the true extent of the snooping could be higher.

A GCHQ spokesman said 'we do not comment on intelligence matters, but added: 'Our work is carried out in accordance with a strict legal and policy framework.'

The Intelligence and Security Committee will receive a report on the claims 'very shortly', according to chairman Sir Malcolm Rifkind.

'The ISC is aware of the allegations surrounding data obtained by GCHQ via the US Prism programme', he said. 'The ISC will decide what further action needs to be taken as soon as it receives that informa-

By Jack Doyle  
Home Affairs Correspondent

tion.' Privacy campaigners warned that the revelations suggested the creation of a 'Snooper's Charter by the back door'.

They come after a proposed plan to pay internet companies to collate user data from UK computers was dropped only last month in the face of opposition from Tory backbenchers and Liberal Democrats.

Last night Labour called on David Cameron to come clean to MPs on the extent of Britain's role. Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said: 'The Prime Minister should brief the ISC on what ministers know and should ask the ISC to report on the UK's relationship with the Prism programme, the nature of intelligence being

## 'Tap directly into the servers'

gathered, the extent of UK oversight by ministers and others, and the level of safeguards and compliance with the law.'

The Guardian said it obtained the slides from a whistleblowing intelligence officer worried about invasions of privacy. 'They quite literally can watch your ideas form as you type', the officer is quoted as saying.

Reports by the paper and The Washington Post suggested the FBI and the NSA can tap directly into the central servers of nine leading internet companies.

The documents suggest that the servers allows 'collection directly from the servers' of the companies and is conducted with their assistance. But a number of

them, including Google, Apple, Yahoo and Facebook denied the government had 'direct access' to their servers.

Microsoft said it does not voluntarily participate in any government data collection and only complies with orders for requests about specific accounts or identifiers.

Yet one slide appears to be a timeline of when the companies began to participate in Prism, starting with Microsoft in September 2007 and ending with Apple in October 2012. According to the reports, Prism was established under President Bush in 2007 and has grown 'exponentially' under President Obama.

The Director of US National Intelligence said that the law ensures that only 'non-US persons outside the US are targeted', raising the likelihood that Britons are among those captured in its net.

Emma Carr, of campaign group Big Brother Watch, said: 'We already have laws which allow law enforcement officials to request information about British citizens using American services.'

'If these laws are being circumvented by using these NSA spying arrangements then that would be a very serious issue.' Revelations about the snooping programme follow separate reports about the NSA being allowed to collect all telephone user data from Verizon, one of the largest telephone firms in the US, for three months.

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