



Sir David Norgrove
Chair
UK Statistics Authority
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Dear Sir David

I am writing to raise concerns over the misleading use of statistics regarding Welsh accident and emergency performance by the Prime Minister in yesterday's Prime Minister's Questions.

The Prime Minister said 'If he wants to talk about figures and about targets being missed, yes, the latest figures show that, in England, 497 people were waiting more than 12 hours, but the latest figures also show that, under the Labour Government in Wales, 3,741 people were waiting more than 12 hours.'ⁱ

This is simply not a valid comparison of accident and emergency performance. In England the figures referred to are based on those patients who have waited more than 12 hours from a decision to admit to admission to a ward, whilst the figures for Wales reflect the total time spent in accident and emergency departments. The English figures will not include any of the time which the patient has spent in A&E prior to the decision to admit being taken.

To highlight how misleading this comparison is, the most recent statistics published by NHS Digitalⁱⁱ for England show that the number of patients who spent more than 12 hours in A&E in 2016-17 was 262,367 compared to 3,502 who waited more than 12 hours from a decision to admit to admission.

The selective misuse of statistics like this does not allow for a fair debate on the NHS. Research such as the OECD Review of Health Care Qualityⁱⁱⁱ showed that there was no consistent picture of one nation's health system performing better than another.

I would welcome your view on the use by the Prime Minister of these statistics.

Yours sincerely

CARWYN JONES

ⁱ <https://goo.gl/KhQnmr>

ⁱⁱ <https://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30112>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/oecd-reviews-of-health-care-quality-united-kingdom-2016-9789264239487-en.htm>