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Perpetuating Health Care Policy with the Implementation of an Information System

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Abstract:

The UK has a universal health care system. The National Health Service (NHS) is the second largest organization in the world (1.3 million staff), behind the Chinese Army and the Indian Railway, with an annual expenditure of over £90 billion (\$126 billion). The health care system has moved from the centralized allocation, of limited resources, to providing patients with the choice of family doctor, hospital and specialist. In 2002, a project was started to provide the mechanism to provide patient choice, supported by the central storage of medical records. The project is the largest civil information system project in the world (£14.4 billion, \$20 billion) and is running significantly late and over budget. There is not an obvious financial justification for the project. Despite its difficulties the project is still being funded by central government. The paper proposes that the key benefit, of the information system, will be to perpetuate, as well as implement, the present government's health policy.