Drunk tanks, A&E and out-of-hours care

Sir, One issue that does not help emergency departments is the fall in the number of patient referrals at weekends (report and letters, Jan 10). So-called Saturday shock treatments offered by NHS England shows that the number of patients referred to A&E at weekends has fallen by about 40 per cent per day compared with those referred each weekday. This is because the availability of other NHS services reduces at weekends.

This phenomenon is in addition to those patients to whom NHS III dispatches ambulances; many of these patients will then be brought to A&E. At weekends ambulance dispatches by NHS III also increase. Efforts to increase primary care cover (particularly GP out-of-hours services and dentistry) at weekends, and reduce alcohol consumption in the general population, could alleviate this pressure.

GORDON MILES
CEO, Royal College of Emergency Medicine

Sir, The reason why an increasing number of patients with non-serious emergencies are having to queue up at the A&E is because they are finding it increasingly difficult to gain quicker access to care. The further administration is partially responsible for this state of affairs. GPs were not empowered to cover outside normal working hours and received a substantial salary increase for the inconvenience.

Surely the way forward is to require GPs to reinstate comprehensive care if they choose to provide more drop-in centres for non-serious ‘emergencies’. If these were mutually co-operative relationships with the local police station enabled immediate transport of these patients with non-emergency conditions could be directed to them. Paul Stuart
SYSTON, LEICS

Sir, That a GP receptionist laughs when Janice Turner (Jan 7) seeks medical attention for her 93-year-old mother who has fallen and is now in a wheelchair. How dysfunctional general practice has become in this country. In every other advanced country, it is the patient who decides when they need care. The practice at which I am a patient devotes one eighth of its doctors’ time to acute care. Neither my wife nor myself, both nearly in our eighties, have been able to get to see GP in the past year when we needed urgent attention; we had to resort to A&E for medical care. Every person in this country receiving health care should be able to see a doctor within a reasonable time when ill. As a retired GP myself, I strongly believe we should be able to do with availability of a doctor but with a perverse system that mitigates against this. DR SURENDEER SINGH BAKSHI
Hansworth Wood, Birmingham

Sir, As a very junior A&E doctor years ago, I was impressed by how drunk's rarely required the benefit of anaesthetics for management of neurological problems to a police cell. This has resulted in my recent understanding of the benefits of providing a low-cost alternative to the use of ‘Drunk tanks’ as proposed by Professor Shepherd (letter, Jan 10) to prevent detaining non-violent inebriates. DR ALAN BAILEY
RCGP
Canterbury

Sir, To the 행ing the world problem (among other things) an increase in smoking (and the increase in the number of immigrants) which of itself generates greater economic activity. Sir, Dr Alan Bailey (Jan 10) mentions that price is the only truly viable Press arbitration

Sir, In the debate on press regulation, it has been suggested that there is not an affordable way for the public to bring legal claims against national newspapers. May 1, as the debate spins on, make the revolutionary plea that it be conducted on the basis of fact. IPSO's national members, including the publishers of the Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, and this newspaper. Damascus Collins MP said that those who have a case but cannot afford expertise or lawyers should have somewhere to turn to. They can turn to IPSO. Its scheme provides access to highly respected QCs, such as Heather Rogers and Andrei Page, who can act as arbitrators and balance any inaccuracies of poor shows between the parties. This is provided at a fraction of the cost of an average court case.

We have also structured the scheme to provide an incentive to early settlement to encourage quick resolution of claims and limit legal costs. For a flat fee of £300, complainants can obtain binding rulings on specific legal issues early in the process. These rulings can indicate the likely success of a claim and provide a strong basis from which to achieve an appropriate settlement.

Conflicts of interest can be resolved on the basis of this early ruling will the complainant be asked to begin paying towards arbitration for all the fees are capped and can be automatically recovered from the publisher should the claim be successful. IPSO arbitration gives individuals the chance to have their case heard where they might otherwise be denied justice, and is the only truly viable means of accessing press arbitration.

SIR ALAN MOSES
Chairman, IPSO

Press arbitration

Sir, In the debate on press regulation, it has been suggested that there is not an affordable way for the public to bring legal claims against national newspapers. May 1, as the debate spins on, make the revolutionary plea that it be conducted on the basis of fact. IPSO's national members, including the publishers of the Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, and this newspaper. Damascus Collins MP said that those who have a case but cannot afford expertise or lawyers should have somewhere to turn to. They can turn to IPSO. Its scheme provides access to highly respected QCs, such as Heather Rogers and Andrei Page, who can act as arbitrators and balance any inaccuracies of poor shows between the parties. This is provided at a fraction of the cost of an average court case.

We have also structured the scheme to provide an incentive to early settlement to encourage quick resolution of claims and limit legal costs. For a flat fee of £300, complainants can obtain binding rulings on specific legal issues early in the process. These rulings can indicate the likely success of a claim and provide a strong basis from which to achieve an appropriate settlement.

Conflicts of interest can be resolved on the basis of this early ruling will the complainant be asked to begin paying towards arbitration for all the fees are capped and can be automatically recovered from the publisher should the claim be successful. IPSO arbitration gives individuals the chance to have their case heard where they might otherwise be denied justice, and is the only truly viable means of accessing press arbitration.

SIR ALAN MOSES
Chairman, IPSO