

News release



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A SURVEY FOR NORWICH UNION HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS VOTER SUPPORT FOR TOP-UPS

- **70% welcome the introduction of top-ups for cancer drugs**
- **65% believed ban on top-ups was unfair**

Research by Norwich Union Healthcare has revealed that a clear majority of people back the use of “top-ups” - the mechanism by which patients pay for private drugs while still receiving NHS treatment - particularly for conditions such as cancer. Health Secretary Alan Johnson lifted the ban on top-ups on 4 November and announced a consultation into how the system will work in practice.

The survey results show:

- 57% support for the use of top-ups generally
- 70% back the use of top-ups in cancer cases
- 65% felt that the previous ban on privately funded drug treatments was unfair

But, while the survey for Norwich Union Healthcare, conducted by YouGov, reveals a majority (57%) in favour of the use of private top-ups (as opposed to the taxpayer funding new drugs 33%), 57% of people are concerned that lifting the ban will create an unfair health system, highlighting the complexities of the debate.

The public is less sure about the role of insurance products in helping to pay for top-up treatments, although 28% would consider this route and the same numbers were undecided.

Responding to the survey results, Dr Doug Wright, Norwich Union Healthcare’s Head of Clinical Governance, said: “This survey makes abundantly clear the strong level of support for top-ups, particularly for cancer drugs. There is also an important demographic split - with people aged over 45 more aware of the use of top-ups. But while many are opposed to the ban on top-ups, a question remains around fairness and how to fund top-ups. There are no easy answers here, and the Government’s consultation will be important in clarifying the detail of the scheme, as well as roles and responsibilities.

“The public is agreed that the ban on top-ups is unsustainable, given rising costs in medicines and advances in treatments. NUHC sees allowing patients to top-up their NHS treatment as a pragmatic response to patients' desire to get the treatments and care that they need.

“As far as private insurers are concerned, the research suggests that the public does see a role for cover. But there's more to do to build understanding of our role, and how we can work alongside the NHS to deliver in the best interests of all patients.”

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Notes to Editors

The YouGov survey of 3,944 people revealed that 61% were aware of the previous ban on the use of top-ups - this awareness was particularly high among people aged over 45. It also found that 57% of those surveyed welcomed the use of top-ups in the NHS. The Government lifted the ban on top-ups following a review by Professor Mike Richards. Norwich Union Healthcare played an active part in the review and has welcomed the Government's decision as a first step in providing greater clarity for patients. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 3944 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd - 6th November 2008. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

About Norwich Union Healthcare

Norwich Union Healthcare was founded in 1990 as the healthcare arm of Norwich Union, part of Aviva, and now provides a range of private medical insurance, income protection, occupational health and group life products and services that cover over 2,400,000 lives. It is one of the largest providers of income protection and private medical insurance in the UK.

Norwich Union Occupational Health, a sister company of Norwich Union Healthcare, provides occupational health solutions and services to a wide range of industry sectors. By utilising their large fleet of purpose built mobile clinics and approved medical centres, staffed by a team of experienced occupational physicians and nursing staff, the services are designed to meet the individual needs of clients.

Norwich Union Healthcare is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and is a member of the Association of British Insurers and the Financial Ombudsman Service.