

Patients report worse care experience in GP practices owned by limited companies

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New research published today by the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* concludes that patients registered to general practices owned by limited companies, including large organisations, reported worse experiences of their care than other patients. The research examined data for 7,949 general practices in England included in the General Practice Patient Survey 2013-2014.

The researchers, from Imperial College London, looked at five patient experience measures for the study: the frequency of consulting a preferred doctor; the ability to get a convenient appointment; rating of doctor communication skills; ease of contacting the practice by telephone; and the overall experience.

Dr Thomas Cowling, lead author of the research paper, said: "Across all contract and ownership types, [patients](#) generally reported positive experiences of their general practices. However, patients registered to [general practices](#) owned by limited companies reported worse experience of their care than patients registered to other practices on average."

The researchers found the sizes of the differences in experience varied from moderate to large across four outcome measures and were largest for the frequency of consulting a preferred doctor.

Dr Cowling said: "It is the responsibility of commissioners, regulators, clinicians and owners to guarantee that individual practices meet expected standards while ensuring that care quality is not systematically associated with the ownership.

"Commissioners also need to ensure that contracts offer good value for money, more so at a time when the NHS is very financially challenged."

More information: Contract and ownership type of general practices and patient experience in England: multilevel analysis of a national cross-sectional survey, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/0141076817738499](https://doi.org/10.1177/0141076817738499))

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