

Andrew Street

What impact does hospital treatment have on health status?

Millions are admitted to hospital every year but very little is known about the impact that hospital treatment has on their health status. It is extraordinary that this remains the case. Back in 1860s Florence Nightingale led efforts to collect information about whether and by how much hospital treatment aided recovery and hospitals published results for their patients. But publication suddenly ceased, suppressed by the medical profession. It wasn't until the 1990s that similar information was published, but then only about how many people survived their treatment, not about how much it had made them better. This has made it virtually impossible to assess how well the health system is fulfilling its primary function of improving the health of the nation. In some countries things are slowly changing, with patients now providing information about the outcomes they experience following some types of treatment. In this talk, I describe Florence Nightingale's vision for the collection and use of information about health outcomes and the medico-political tensions that prevented this vision being realised for so many years. I then summarise research that uses this information to hold the health system to account and for improving the quality of care and the health of those who use the health service.

Andrew Street is a Professor of Health Economics and Director of the Health Policy team in the Centre for Health Economics and Director of the Economics of Social and Health Care Research Unit. His research includes measurement of NHS productivity, design of hospital payment systems, analysis of health outcomes following treatment, and policy to improve integration of health and social care.