From curious incidence to a new paradigm for governance

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*Location as Destiny: A Conference in Honor of John E. Wennberg*

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From curious incidence to a new paradigm

Curious incidence
- Tonsillectomy
- Impact on policy

New paradigm for governance
- Formula funding?
- Provider payment?
- Provider choice?
- Policy agenda?

MRC (1938): Tendency to be performed as a routine prophylactic ritual for no particular reason & with no particular result.

Tonsillectomy incidence ‘three-fold heavier in children of well to do’

7 poor children died in England in 1930s every month as a result of tonsillectomies.

Glover (1938) Proceedings Royal Society of Medicine
Evidence for tonsillectomy

Medical Research Council (1938)
- No evidence wholesale tonsillectomy ↓ incidence of infections

Cochrane review (2009)
- Severe & recurrent tonsillitis
  - may benefit
  - but risks of surgery
  - & may ‘grow out’ of problem
- Less severe
  - potential benefits even more modest

Burkinshaw (1956) BMJ
Burton & Glasziou (2009) Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
England 2000s

Appleby et al (2011) King’s Fund

Suleman et al (2010) *Clinical Otolaryngology*

seven-fold difference in tonsillectomy rates
Systemic influences & variations in admission rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charges</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Gatekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment</td>
<td>FFS</td>
<td>Salaried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SCV</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>50 – 70%</td>
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The curious incident of the dog in the night time

most striking fact about large & extensively documented variations in medical practice: minimal impact on health policy

English NHS: new paradigm for governance?

Purchasers funded equitably by risk

Provider choice

Providers funded by standard tariffs

Utilisation/diagnoses → morbidity

Shared decision-making

Supply-sensitive care?
New paradigm on the policy agenda?

‘Health care reform debate of 2009–2010 confirmed that judgment… variations literature, in which his Dartmouth group has played so large a part, dominated discussion of policies for controlling health care costs’

White (2011) & Skinner (2011) *JPPL*