



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 8, 2011

British Health Care Official Advocates Letting Premature Babies Die

Because prominent members of the Obama administration continue to tout British health care as an example for America to emulate, it's necessary to highlight the endless array of issues connected to Britain's National Health Service. In the most recent example, a major British health care official admitted in an upcoming documentary that premature babies born at 23 weeks gestation or earlier should be left to die because of cost concerns.



According to Britain's [Daily Mail](#), the National Health Service spends more than \$16 million on treating premature babies, many of whom die or survive with birth defects. NHS guidelines indicate that babies born under 22 weeks should not be resuscitated, but those born between 22 and 25 weeks receive intensive care.

NHS official Dr. Daphne Austin, in an appearance on the BBC program entitled *23 Week Babies: The Price of Life*, said, "If it was my child, from all the evidence and information that I know, I would not resuscitate."

She added:

We are doing more harm than good by resuscitating 23-weekers. I can't think of very many interventions that have such poor outcomes. For me, the big issue is that we're spending an awful lot of money on treatments that have very marginal benefit. I would prefer to free up that money to spend on providing support to people who have much more lifelong chronic conditions.

Austin's assertions reflect the prevailing cost/benefit analysis application of British socialized medicine that citizens in the United States have fortunately not yet encountered. Austin believes that the treatment of premature babies should be examined "in the same way as we've made hard decisions about things like cancer drugs, saying the outcomes just aren't good enough and therefore we don't use them."

Furthermore, Dr. Austin contends that parents should be allowed minimal input in the matter: "There's a lot of emphasis on the parents' views and what they want. But somewhere in there, there needs to be an advocate for the baby." Austin's assertions clearly assume that the baby would opt for death.

Sadly, Dr. Austin is not the first to advocate for something so reprehensible. Last October, UK advice columnist Virginia Ironside [declared](#) that a suffering child should be smothered to death in order to put the child out of his or her misery:



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If a baby's going to be born severely disabled or totally unwanted, surely an abortion is the act of a loving mother. If I were the mother of a suffering child — I mean a deeply suffering child — I would be the first to want to put a pillow over its face...If it was a child I really loved, who was in agony, I think any good mother would.

What is so frightening about the prevalence of such sentiments among British health care officials is that current U.S. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services Director Donald Berwick has confessed that he is very fond of the NHS.

On March 12, 2010, [The Hill](#) quoted Senator Pat Roberts, who said of Berwick after careful inspection of his record:

Dr. Berwick is a huge fan...of the NHS, a system that relies on rationing health care to hold down costs. Dr Berwick has said, "I am a romantic about the NHS; I love it," and "the NHS is not just a national treasure, it is a global treasure."

However, according to [Politico](#), Donald Berwick will not secure the nomination as CMS administrator this year, as 42 Republican senators have voiced their opposition to the nomination in a letter addressed to Senate Democrats:

At a meeting with health care lobbyists Friday, Democratic Senate Finance Committee staffers indicated that the nomination is dead, that there will be no confirmation hearing, and that they'll soon be discussing "next steps" for CMS.

If he is not confirmed by the Senate, Berwick will have to leave by the end of 2011.

The failure to secure a nomination may not be enough to rid the department of Berwick, however. Ed Morrissey of *Hot Air* [explains](#), "The question will be whether Obama accepts defeat this time and picks someone less controversial to run Medicare and Medicaid, or whether he sticks a thumb in the Senate's eye and gives Berwick another recess appointment."

Meanwhile, the BBC documentary wherein Dr. Austin appears is scheduled to air on Britain's BBC2 on Wednesday night.

Graphic: Logos of the British National Health Service (top) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



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