Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

I am deeply concerned about the impact on patient care caused by the proposed three days of industrial action, including two days of a full walk-out. Will the Secretary of State say what advance preparations are taking place to ensure patient safety? Will he reassure the House that there are no preconditions that will act as barriers and to which the BMA has to agree before negotiations can take place?

Jeremy Hunt The Secretary of State for Health

I absolutely give my hon. Friend that reassurance. There are no preconditions, and this morning I wrote again to the BMA to reiterate that point. Of course, if we fail to make progress we have to implement our manifesto commitments, but we are willing to talk about absolutely everything. I agree strongly with my hon. Friend that it will be difficult to avoid harm to patients during those three days of industrial action. Delaying a cancer clinic might mean that someone gets a later diagnosis than they should get, and a hip operation might be delayed when someone is in a great deal of pain. It will be hard to avoid such things impacting on patients, and I urge the BMA to listen to the royal colleges"and many others"and call off the strike.

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