

## 10,000 miles to cure a bad back

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By David Greenwood, Daily Post



A GRANDMOTHER paid £5,000 for an operation in India after the NHS said they could do nothing to heal her back pain.

Ellen Parry last night revealed how she had been given a new lease of life by surgeons 5,000 miles away in Bangalore.

But her lack of treatment in the UK last night sparked angry criticism of the NHS - with one senior politician claiming it "a savage indictment of a health service in decline".

The 59-year-old, who has three sons and four grandchildren, flew to India after being told by a clinic at Ysbyty Gwynedd there was nothing they could do for her.

She paid £480 for a private MRI scan in Bangor which revealed she had suffered a collapsed disc in the lower back.

Mrs Parry said after a more than a year, with the pain becoming worse, her husband Keith read about private treatment available in India. She flew out a few weeks later.

Mrs Parry, who runs a garage with her husband in Glan Conwy, was back home in North Wales last night following a successful operation in Bangalore where she was given VIP treatment.

She said: "It is absolutely fantastic - I just can't get used to not being in pain anymore."

Mrs Parry's back troubles began two-and-a half-years ago.

"I hadn't any problems before and I went along to see my GP," she said. "I was referred to the pain clinic at Ysbyty Gwynedd but was told nothing could be done. "I thought it could have been arthritis or simply wear and tear, so I decided to go private and paid £480 for an MRI scan which showed I had a collapsed disc in the lower back.

"That was in the summer of last year. After that nothing really happened but the pain became worse. I was never offered any operation on the NHS."

The Parrys got in touch with the Taj Medical Group in Warwickshire.

"We sent them a copy of the scan and they referred my case to surgeons at the Ramiah Memorial hospital in Bangalore, which was set up as a trust.

I was in e-mail contact with neuro-surgeon Dr Ravi Varma at the hospital.

"Everything was set up by the Taj people, even the direct British Airways flights from Heathrow to Bangalore. We were met by representatives from the hospital and were shown to a VIP suite.

"It was simply five star luxury. The operation was carried out by Dr Varma, and his father who is a renowned surgeon in India on November 6, five days after we arrived."

Mrs Parry, who is originally from Bethel, near Caernarfon, was in theatre for two-and-a-half hours.

"They were absolutely superb. They have the best equipment. I woke up with no pain."

Plaid Cymru Parliamentary leader Elfyn Llwyd last night said the case highlighted the problems in the NHS.

"They talk in terms of India being a third world country but I am afraid when it comes to health, this country, in many aspects, has become third rate in caring for people."

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Waiting cut

PATIENTS awaiting dental treatment at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd are being sent to other hospitals to help reduce the waiting-list.

Cash-strapped Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust currently has a total of 2,624 patients who have been waiting more than six months. That's about 1,100 more than the target set by the trust itself.

Orthodontics is the greatest area of concern, so local health boards have started to commission care with alternative providers in neighbouring areas.