

Health and Social Care: NHS Services: Online Access

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

I welcome the Secretary of State to his post. He will know that no regulator is prospectively examining the safety and effectiveness of diagnostic apps in use in the NHS. I wrote to his predecessor recently following concerns that were raised with me about Babylon's apps, which could be missing symptoms of meningitis and heart attack, for example. What steps will the Secretary of State take to ensure that, as these technologies are rolled out, patients have absolute confidence that they have been properly evaluated for safety and effectiveness? Will he set out how he will take that forward?

Matthew Hancock Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

The Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee makes a really important point. There is no greater enthusiast for technology than me—as you well know, Mr Speaker—but the thing about new technology is that the rules sometimes need to be updated to take changes in technology into account. The response when there are challenges such as the one my hon. Friend raises is not to reject the technology, but the opposite: to keep improving the technology so that it gets better and better, and to make sure that the rules keep up to pace. I spoke to Simon Stevens at NHS England about this only this morning—we have had a series of conversations in the past couple of weeks since I have been in post—and he is reviewing this exact question. I am absolutely sure that we will get to the right answer.

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