



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Member of the European Parliament

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

4th May 2018

Dear

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) provides, free at the point of use, care for UK citizens travelling within the European Union and the European Economic Area. For patients with kidney failure who require dialysis three times per week, the EHIC card and the ability to pre-book their treatment at an EU hospital gives them the freedom to make temporary travel i.e. a holiday in the EU.

Private travel insurance does not provide a viable alternative to EHIC card for dialysis patients. Insurance companies will not cover the treatment, as a pre-existing condition. The cost of paying privately for dialysis sessions in the EU is up to 1000 euro a week depending on the circumstances and the procedures used.

There are currently 29,000 dialysis patients in the UK and for them Brexit could mean losing their right to travel abroad, whether that be a relaxing break, visiting relatives or for work. This could have a serious impact on the mental health and well-being of dialysis patients who already deal with an extremely arduous and time-consuming treatment as it is - an average dialysis session lasts four hours and must be repeated three times a week. Equally, there will be an impact on EU dialysis patients travelling to the UK. London especially will hopefully remain a desirable destination for Europeans post-Brexit and it is mutually beneficial not to discourage people from visiting

As UK Members of the European Parliament, we call on you as our Health Secretary to fight to defend UK citizens' EHIC card in these Brexit negotiations. The Vote Leave campaign falsely claimed that leaving the EU would mean a boost of £350m for the NHS and many voted for this believing it was true. Yet there was never any mention about losing EHIC cards and the right to be treated in EU hospitals.

Mr Hunt, will you now stand up for dialysis patients, who on top of struggling to comprehend their diagnosis, now risk losing the freedom that the EHIC card permits them?

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Bearder MEP (Liberal Democrat), Seb Dance MEP (Labour), Alyn Smith MEP (SNP),

Charles Tannock MEP (Conservative), Molly Scott Cato MEP (Green), Jill Evans MEP (Plaid Cymru),

Jude Kirton-Darling MEP (Labour), Clare Moody MEP (Labour), John Howarth MEP (Labour),

Julie Ward MEP (Labour), Richard Corbett MEP (Labour), Catherine Stihler MEP (Labour),

Keith Taylor MEP (Green), Derek Vaughan MEP (Labour), Mary Honeyball MEP (Labour),

Jean Lambert MEP (Green),