

BBC Panorama- Surgery's Dirty Secrets

ABHI Statement:

Over recent years, we have seen a trend within the NHS for surgical instruments to become commoditised and for cost to become a key purchasing criterion above patient safety, quality and long term value for money. It is therefore a significant development that a BBC programme has chosen to investigate the manner in which surgical instruments are made and the ABHI is pleased that a wider interest is being shown in trying to better understand the surgical instrument industry.

The issues raised by the programme of manufacturing conditions, business ethics, patient safety and quality of both product and manufacture are key issues which are already being discussed by the ABHI surgical instrument sector today. The challenge that we face is how best to work together with other stakeholders to help provide an enhanced level of awareness, education and understanding within the NHS, so that a better and more informed purchasing decision may be made.

It has been refreshing to see the recent wave of programming which has highlighted the significant role played by British manufacture per se on a national and international level and the medical device industry deserves a similar level of acknowledgement and support. It is important to recognise that there is a long-standing, well-established British surgical instrument industry which should be applauded for the quality of manufacture and that there are a number of manufacturers who already operate to a very high standard, both on quality and ethical levels.

The ethical production and sourcing of quality surgical instruments is the collective responsibility of all those involved, including the MHRA, the Department of Health, the NHS, suppliers and manufacturers. It has been a focus of the ABHI Surgical Instruments sector group to raise an awareness of the important role that surgical instruments play and to put them back at the heart of the decision making process. The ABHI remains committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that the focus of the purchasing decision does not rest purely with price, but that patient safety, ethical sourcing and quality become synonymous with and hallmarks of the NHS.