

Royal Bournemouth Hospital blacklists World Socialist Web Site

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In a blatant act of censorship, the Royal Bournemouth Hospital (RBH) has blacklisted the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) on its NHS Wi-Fi system.

The move by RBH, part of the newly University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (UHD), came shortly after the WSWS posted a letter from a frontline nurse exposing the abysmal working conditions of nurses, doctors and other health workers.

Instead of addressing the grievances highlighted in the frontline nurse's letter, UHD management is desperately trying to shut down any discussion in the workforce about patient and staff safety. Moreover, they are trying to discredit the WSWS which is giving a voice to health workers not only at the UHD and throughout the National Health Service (NHS) but internationally.

Health workers who had previously accessed the WSWS without any issues using the NHS Wi-Fi system reported finding it difficult to do so since the latest revelations on the hospital were published. They were, however, able to visit the website when they used their own mobile data. Some submitted screenshots of the messages they received when they tried to access the WSWS article, which they explain is circulating widely among hospital staff in their online groups on Facebook, WhatsApp and Messenger.

The message gives the impression that the WSWS is some sort of rogue website which is trying to steal personal information, such as passwords or credit card numbers. When a regular user of WSWS ignores the warnings and continues, they get the following message: "The web page you are trying to access has been blocked by our content filter provider."

Commenting on this censorship, a health care assistant at the hospital said, "This is shocking. This is the only place where the truth was told. Now they are

blocking it instead of asking us what our problems are. I have not seen a single article in the *Daily Echo* [local newspaper] or BBC describing the true situation on the floor. They only tell us the point of view of the management."

Since April, the WSWS has published five letters from frontline workers at Bournemouth and Poole hospitals detailing management's criminal indifference to patient safety and staff wellbeing—in line with that of the Conservative government.

In the most recent letter to the WSWS, a frontline nurse wrote, "We have been on level 4 Operational Pressures Escalation Alert for months. Patient safety and care has also been compromised for months. UHD is one of the worst hit trusts in the South West of England. Our own lives and wellbeing are in jeopardy.

"We saw this coming from the first wave of the pandemic and colleagues sounded the alarm by speaking out. But these warnings have fallen on deaf ears."

RBH hospital responded to the original letter in April by joining with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) to attack the author and make lying denials of their claims in the local newspaper, the *Bournemouth Daily Echo*. The WSWS and the frontline nurse delivered a devastating rebuttal. Now the hospital management are responding with the blunt instrument of censorship.

Their concern is not solely for the exposure of conditions in the UHD, but the role the WSWS's reporting is playing in revealing the crisis throughout the NHS. Tens of thousands of health workers have succumbed to COVID-19 with 883 of them now dead in England and Wales and many struggling with "Long COVID" and post-traumatic stress disorder.

NHS governing bodies, under the directives of the

government, are desperately trying to downplay the enormity of the crisis. They are hostile to any criticism and trying to shutdown dissent by gagging the workforce.

Anger among health care workers about this situation is widespread. The articles on the WSWS regarding RBH have sparked widespread discussion on social media. Scores of commenters have explained that they face the same conditions in hospitals all over the country.

The most recent frontline nurse's letter reached nearly 15,000 people on the NHS Workers Say NO to Public Sector pay inequality Facebook group alone.

Tina commented, "It makes me feel angry that you are working in such appalling conditions, on such poor pay and the govt says they have done everything they can. My heart goes out to you all on the frontline."

Kim wrote, "I am furious that this government has let down our frontline staff and left you without adequate PPE and at breaking point. The fact you're operating with decreased staffing is inadequate and therefore you must be totally shattered and feel abandoned by the government's poor ability to protect you and everyone you are caring for. You provide amazing services and we thank you for giving our community so much."

On the Facebook group Fighting for our NHS, Joyce commented, "I couldn't have put it better myself. This government has blood on their hands. Thank you for posting."

Mary expressed her views about the letter on the Manchester Royal Infirmary Facebook page: "This makes me so angry, on so many levels and I have been angry for more than a year now. Chronic under-investment in healthcare and the undervaluing of a dedicated workforce, to the extent of hundreds of deaths of healthcare workers is a national disgrace. If we had closed our borders and locked down sooner, thousands of lives would have been saved. Nursing used to be so different and I can still remember when I looked forward to going to work and was proud of our health service—not now!"

NHS FightBack, an initiative of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), received the following comment on its Facebook page from another worker at RBH endorsing the content of the letters published on the WSWS:

"I'm an HCA [Health Care Assistant] at Royal Bournemouth. I will confirm everything the nurse

wrote about. I'm already known for speaking my mind and it DOES NOT go down well. I do NOT WANT to be named. I confirm PPE [personal protective equipment] at the beginning was ridiculous. I confirm upper management who are NOT ON THE FLOOR have absolute no idea of what we go through. It appears to be ALL about saving money. Certainly NOT patient and staff care.

"Everyone is trying to put on a brave face. The on floor staff are amazing. Our Sisters are amazing. Beyond that forget it. It's all just placating emails and empty words.

"I TRULY care about my colleagues and patients but I no longer love my job."

Above all, the government and NHS management are terrified that health care workers' anger and discontent will be transformed into organised opposition in a fight for genuinely safe and secure working conditions. This is the basis of the programme of the WSWS, the SEP and NHS FightBack.

As the pandemic crisis more and more clearly exposes the divide between the ruling class—seeking to defend profits—and the working class—seeking to save lives—that programme is coming under an escalating attack. A week ago, the accounts of leading members of the SEP and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, as well as the London Bus Drivers Rank-and-File Safety Committee, were suspended by Facebook without warning or explanation.

The SEP mobilised a powerful campaign of protest and forced Facebook to retreat. The same must now be done at RBH.

The WSWS demands that access to the site be immediately restored by hospital management. Workers have a right to speak out about and access vital information on their conditions, and to have their concerns reported. We call on our readers to send letters of protest to RBH, copied to the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact