# **An agonising wait for surgery – and NHS rationing – forced me to go private**

**Eric Tyrer** reluctantly took out a loan to see an orthopaedic surgeon privately – at the same hospital and with the same surgeons as NHS patients

Alexandra McTeare’s account of her wait for knee surgery and all the problems associated with it ([Letters, 5 March](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/05/my-long-and-painful-wait-for-nhs-knee-surgery-has-left-me-depressed)) resonates with my own experience. However, here in Brighton the wait for knee surgery is further complicated by the additional hurdle of actually getting on to the waiting list.

I visited my GP over a year ago with arthritic pains in my knee, but I was informed that he was unable to refer me directly to a surgeon, as this could only be done through a particular group of physiotherapists. For over nine months I saw a number of physiotherapists, but was not referred to a surgeon. It appears that the non-doctors of this group of physiotherapists are operating a form of opaque rationing of access to orthopaedic surgeons (possibly based on my age of 76) to restrict the number of patients getting on to the waiting list.

A cynic might suggest that this is some government policy to massage waiting list statistics. After 10 months, out of a mixture of pain and desperation, and a sense of my own dwindling years, I was forced to reluctantly take out a loan to see an orthopaedic surgeon privately (at the same hospital and with the same surgeons as [NHS](https://www.theguardian.com/society/nhs) patients). I only hope that it will be worth the expense and that I will live long enough to pay off the loan and not leave it as a legacy for my son.