

From The Times  
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## **A GP still gives great value**

Sir, Carol Sarler suggests that patient filtering is better done by nurses. Indeed, nurses man the phones of NHS Direct. But because they can't afford to miss anything important, the advice given is almost invariably "see your GP" or "go to casualty". Consequently, the service has failed to reduce the demands on A&E departments and GP surgeries, and has diverted valuable nursing staff from the front line.

GPs do not hedge their bets in this way; they use their experience and training to deal definitively with patients, frequently avoiding unnecessary hospital referrals. Unlike nurses, they also take full responsibility for their decisions, and pay at least £5,000 per year in insurance premiums to cover against the occasional error. They offer a highly cost-effective service, without which our already struggling hospitals would be in meltdown.

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