

# A price on your health

I only see them now and again, my closest most distant friends  
The sort you value most of all, who'll tell you what they really feel  
In March fifteen they told me: that lump on your nose has grown again  
Get yourself to healthcare, you can't take chances at your age, man

Next day I was there, panic in eye and voice, booked in the next week  
Oh I don't think you need worry about it. Not his nose, is it?  
I'll refer you to dermatology. When might I be seen, then?  
No idea. There's a waiting list, you know. How long? I dunno.

Next month I was back. I thought these things were meant to be  
important?  
Urgent? Early treatment vital, all that? When will I see someone?  
No idea. There's a waiting list, you know. How long? I dunno.  
And three and six and nine months on the same question, the same  
reply.

At last. Lump gone. Some strangely named carcinoma...that scary word  
No cause for worry. Non-malignant, not the sort that spread elsewhere  
But keep a watch out for any new lumps, OK? Damn right I will  
How's that for a new chat-up line: just check my back for any lumps?

An interlude, just fifteen months...

Just play music

Make a cup of tea

Make another cup of tea

Same friends, same concerns, a lump now on my forehead. Different doctor, different town, but hey! Some things don't change. The dermatology lists. How long is it? I dunno. All I know is, it's long. OK, can I go private? That's different. Like American Express, that will do nicely sir

Two weeks later I am there. My worry was no worry, he said but my no worry was some concern, and what about this one here? What one where? I hadn't seen anything, still couldn't see a thing But he said he was concerned, so let's deal with all of them, shall we?

Another fortnight. One chopped, one scraped, and one biopsied. That hurt! One grand-sized bill. That hurt just as much. What about those who can't pay? And soon the test result. Another one just like last year's, he says. I'll do it next month, best to be safe. The cost? About twelve fifty.

I asked my own doctor: what if I can't pay? It's a lot, you know? I'll refer you to dermatology. When might I be seen, then? No idea. There's a waiting list, you know. How long? I dunno, But you know, these things won't kill you, they're not the sort that spread elsewhere.

Dear Doctor. This is just to let you know I have decided not to come back to have the invisible lump removed. It's not that I distrust your diagnosis, or resent your bill. A man has to live! But I will take my chance amidst my ever-patients fellow men and women who, like that wonderful man the late A A Gill, on our NHS across seventy years -my seventy years – have always been able to depend ...