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Primary healthcare: The rise and decline of patient care

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Total quality management (TQM) was the management approach of the 1990s. With roots in the manufacturing industry both in the USA and Japan, it was, with the active encouragement of the Department of Health in the United Kingdom, universally accepted within the British National Health Service (NHS) as a panacea to cure all ills associated with the poor delivery of care. However, the consensus of opinion is that hospital units experienced tremendous difficulties in achieving sustainable TQM,

which resulted in 'total' disillusionment and, as a consequence, a decline in efforts to adopt TQM across the NHS. Against this background, this paper will identify the barriers experienced by TQM managers in NHS in the implementation of TQM; which if identified and eliminated prior to implementation could have prevented the decline of TQM as a strategy for improving the provision and delivery of quality patient care.

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