**IBD UK**

**c/o Crohn's & Colitis UK**

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Open letter: May 2021

**Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP**

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care**

**Department of Health and Social Care**

**Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries Unit**

**39 Victoria Street**

**London**

**SW1H 0EU**

Dear Secretary of State

We are writing to call for government action to improve healthcare for over half a million adults and children living with IBD in the UK.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) - the two main forms of which are Crohn’s Disease and Ulcerative Colitis – is a lifelong condition with extensive effects ranging from severe diarrhoea with blood and mucus, to weight loss, extreme fatigue, severe physical pain, and impact on mental wellbeing. Delayed intervention and ineffective treatments can lead to serious complications and surgery is sometimes necessary.

Despite its scale and impact – lifetime costs for IBD are comparable to that for heart disease or cancer – it remains largely hidden from public view IBD UK found that 26% of patients waited over a year for a diagnosis, with 41% being admitted to A&E and 12% attending over three times before being diagnosed. 72% of all hospital admissions for IBD patients were emergencies - a huge individual health impact and cost to the NHS in avoidable urgent and emergency care. Dedicated healthcare professionals and specialist services are stretched beyond capacity.

The impact of the pandemic has exacerbated these pre-existing issues. As waiting lists are tackled, it is critical that people with IBD are not forgotten, the consequences of which would be profound.

IBD UK’s new report sets out practical recommendations for change. The Government must match the leadership and action shown by people living with Crohn’s and Colitis, clinicians and all the partners in IBD UK – including royal colleges, professional associations, and patient charities, such as Crohn’s & Colitis UK. We are ready to play our part. We now need the Government to make IBD a priority and communicate a clear strategy of how care will be improved over the next 5 years.

Yours faithfully,

* Sarah Sleet, Chair of IBD UK and CEO of Crohn’s & Colitis UK
* Dr Alastair McKinlay, President, British Society of Gastroenterology
* Professor Steven Brown, President, Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
* Jude Diggins, Director of Nursing, Policy, and Practice, Royal College of Nursing
* Sandra Gidley, President, Royal Pharmaceutical Society
* Dr Sue Protheroe, President, British Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
* Professor Stuart Taylor, President, British Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology
* Dr Mike Osborn, President, Royal College of Pathologists
* Dr Kevin Barrett, Chair, Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology
* Sarah Carter, Chief Executive Officer, UK Clinical Pharmacy Association
* Dr Trevor Smith, President, British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
* Caroline Bovey, Chair, British Dietetic Association
* Michael Bell, Chief Executive, Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Association
* Margaret Lee, Chair, Crohn’s in Childhood Research Association
* Liz Dobson, Chief Executive, IBD Registry

(Data from: [IBD UK](https://www.ibduk.org/about-ibd-uk)’s new report [*Crohn’s and Colitis Care in the UK: The Hidden Cost and a Vision for Change*](https://www.ibduk.org/reports/crohns-and-colitis-care-in-the-uk-the-hidden-cost-and-a-vision-for-change) - the most complete assessment of care to date, based on data from hundreds of healthcare professionals and thousands of people across the UK living with IBD)