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Patients are paying the ultimate price for NHS targets

By [Daily Mail Comment](#)

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Who's to blame: News broke this week of more than 70 needless deaths on the filthy, blood-splattered wards of Basildon Hospital

In the rush to clear themselves of blame for the needless deaths of more than 70 patients on the filthy, blood-splattered wards of Basildon Hospital, ministers insisted the scandal was an 'isolated case'.

Never mind the fact the Government's own Care Quality Commission inspectors had rated this supposedly elite foundation hospital as good, and awarded it 13 out of 14 for cleanliness.

Of course, it wasn't long before another 'isolated case' came along at Colchester Hospital University Foundation Trust, where the chairman was sacked for presiding over an equally alarming death rate and excessive waiting times in A&E.

Now, shockingly, it emerges that, across the NHS, there are 26 hospitals with higher than expected death rates, in which 3,000 patients may have suffered unnecessary deaths.

The sheer scale of human misery at the hands of an NHS which devours £2billion a week is deeply depressing.

Let's be clear: the Mail has huge admiration for the self-sacrificing dedication of many NHS staff.

But the hands of these professionals have been tied by a Government target and inspection regime which is stultifying individual responsibility.

Too often patients come a sorry second to Whitehall targets. And, as it emerged this week, too often hospitals are only cleaned on the handful of days when inspectors are due.

Doctors, nurses and cleaners work not as one, but as isolated, box-ticking units fulfilling ever more regulatory demands.

The dead hand of central Government control is ruining the NHS. And the patients are paying with their lives.

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