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Julie

Cooper MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, commenting on reports of increases in waiting times for hip operations, said:

"It

is absolutely shocking in 21st Century Britain that patients in some parts of the country will only qualify for knee and hip replacement operations on the NHS if they can prove pain so exceptional that it prevents sleep.

"Rationing

of this kind is totally unacceptable and is against the best traditions of the

NHS. However, there are concerns that if the Government continues to deny sufficient funding to the NHS, rationing of treatments could become more widespread."