

UK pharma industry urges huge health spend hike

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Britain's ailing National Health Service needs an annual injection of more than £26 billion, the pharmaceutical industry said Thursday as the country prepares for Brexit and a general election.

"The new government must be more ambitious in securing a world-class NHS for patients and improve access to medicines in line with other developed nations," the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) said in a statement ahead of the national vote on June 8.

Meanwhile ahead of Britain exiting the European Union, the ABPI called on the new government to implement an "industrial strategy that cements the UK's position as a leading global hub for life science, and attract significant new international investment".

Launching its manifesto for the [general election](#), the association said the new administration should seek to increase healthcare investment to 11.3 percent of UK Gross Domestic Product, placing it in-line with the average figure across the G7 grouping of developed nations.

"The UK is currently sixth lowest out of the G7 nations for investment in healthcare, spending 9.9 percent of GDP. Only Italy invests less," the ABPI said.

The increase works out at about £26.5 billion pounds per year (\$34 billion, 31 billion euros).

"This general election comes at a critical juncture," added new ABPI president Lisa Anson.

"Do we want to improve NHS patient outcomes and ensure Britain continues to be a global player in life sciences, or run the risk of the UK becoming a desert for healthcare innovation?"

"Patients and voters will expect each party to set out a clear strategy to address this important issue," she said.

The ABPI represents companies supplying more than 80 percent of all branded medicines used by the National Health Service and those researching and developing new medicines, according to its website.

A pillar of the post-World War II welfare state, the NHS is a beloved institution in Britain, but quality of care and funding have become hot political issues.

In parliament on Wednesday, Labour opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn went on the offensive over the government's record on austerity and public services.

Prime Minister Theresa May, leader of the Conservatives, has called a snap vote for June to seek a mandate for Brexit and is expecting to win an increased majority for her party.

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