In yet another act sure to increase the speed of George Orwell's rotations in his grave, the NHS has decided that the opt-out forms I pointed out to many of you a year ago [2] are not worth the paper they are printed on or emails they are sent in. Because, you see, you might have not understood fully the implications of opting out of your data being shared with private companies.

As The Guardian [3] tells us, the NHS has concerns that the wording of the opt-out forms prevents the sharing of vital cancer screening data. So it has decided to disregard all of our objections entirely and share the data with private firms anyway. What happened to compromise? Whither doctor-patient confidentiality? How hard can it honestly be to contact those who objected and ask them if they would mind a revision of the forms to a third option: that where we get to keep our data protected from corporations who can't tell profit from ethics (see Hinchingbrooke Hospital [4] as an example of the results) but still can allow the strictly regulated internal systems of the NHS to carry information about cancer screenings without our medical data finishing up in the hands of (for example) insurers, property speculators and advertisers?

Mutiny gets a bounty

That the state healthcare system has reached a point where it cannot even listen to its own patients as though they are responsible for their own decisions is a chilling death knell for the last vestiges we had of privacy and respect from those who will gather anything they can know about us and use it against us. Bounty Parenting Club [5] were just one example of how morally deficient these people can be, and how exploitative their timing can be for choosing when to ask about data sharing. If the NHS thinks we can't be held responsible for deciding what data we can share, how does it think the likes of Bounty are any more the arbiters? Even if the NHS try to set rules against private providers invading our privacy and endangering our medical well-being in the name of cutting costs, all these corporations have to do is go over the NHS's heads to their chums at the top. The response from the top is to give the bullies all the toys officially. To make it look like the mutiny against universal state healthcare was officially sanctioned all along.

Arbiters only of a once proud sector's demise

Here the foxes are being left to guard the hen house. You know they just can't help themselves, but when
questioned all they will say is “those chickens didn't know what was good for them, the only way to protect them from themselves and diseases was to eat them up”. But the real culprits here aren't even the corporations, it's the system that ensured they were the only apparent option left. When you let politics geared to favour profit take control of a non-profit state healthcare system, you get asset-stripping and failure. You'll eventually be left with expensive private hospitals like those in the USA and a legacy of debt, ill health and death.

The symptoms

There are many symptoms of this profiteering disease spreading in the NHS because of a seemingly wilful blindness to the availability of a workable vaccine. The most serious are yet to come, but a loss of NHS trust in its patients, the very people who pay for it, has to be the most worrisome in the long term to date. They found it only too easy to distance themselves from the public opinion when the public were ill-informed enough to not be able to respond sensibly to a poorly worded scientific report on MMR, [6] and yet took 15 years to calm the hysteria created in a trustworthy-information deficit. Perhaps it is with a jaded memory of those events that the NHS looks sceptically over its spectacles at our concerns now as its offices are robbed from around it. What will it take to help them see what is happening to them?

No miracle cures

There is a very large elephant that has resided in the room throughout all of this debate: the deficit in finances and towering inefficiencies such as accrue in any enormous institution in which a vast amount of time and money is spent restructuring the middle-management and cancelling badly planned new systems. But if the recent governments have taught us anything about the NHS, it's that they don't know what to do with the NHS and don't want to have it as their burden. We could say we would, if in power, shoulder the burden and see it right. But that doesn't stop some other parties being elected in future for some other issues entirely, who then see fit to take bites out of the NHS again and put us back where we started, falling off the edge of a dystopian crater. It is essential that the NHS and its funding are safeguarded in a way which cannot be exploited for funding the next Trident or the next bank bail-out. It is also essential that it is kept free at the point of use and equally available to all in our country, as an institution we can continue to uphold with pride.

It costs money, deal with it. This is about saving lives. It is worth taking the time to actually ask everyone how they want to be involved, how much data they want to provide and how much information they want to know. It is worth it because we are all stakeholders in OUR OWN HEALTH. We all have a right to know and to be heard on any part of it that effects us directly or indirectly. In the internet age, this is not just a good idea. It's quite do-able.

The heavily misused drug of profit turns the rest of us ghostly pale. The side effects of using industry lobbying to form your policies are plain to see, perhaps most clearly in health.

The Pirate Party UK knows the value of the NHS.

Some things just don't make sense when you try to monetise them.

If you make it about how many fat cats you can make rich, you're doing it wrong.

We used to love you, NHS. It would be great to know you loved us.
We want to be able to trust you again. So please, trust us when we say what we want and don't want.

We need to work together to bring you back from these dark days and then on to your full potential.

Tags: