

TheBigOptOut.org

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Mass patient opt-out moves to surgeries

TheBigOptOut.org launched a campaign on the 29th November to get patients to opt out of having their medical information uploaded to the NHS 'Spine'. Many patients have already opted out.

Today TheBigOptOut.org releases an opt-out leaflet that sympathetic GPs can leave in their surgery waiting rooms, so that patients will find it convenient to keep their medical records where they should be – between themselves and their doctor.

Said Helen Wilkinson, National Coordinator of TheBigOptOut.org, 'We welcome the advice in E-health Insider today from the Medical Protection Society, the doctors' liability insurers, that patients have opt-out rights in respect of the NHS central databases, and that the MPS considers it appropriate for GPs to record patients' wishes in the way that TheBigOptOut.org has recommended. We also welcome confirmation that the BMA fully supports patients who wish to opt out from the national database.'

Said Ross Anderson, Professor of Security Engineering at Cambridge 'A similar problem in Iceland was solved when doctors made it easy for patients to opt out of a proposed national medical database. The database was later changed from opt-out to opt-in, which settled the problems. I hope that a similar solution can be found in the NHS.'

-ENDS-

Notes for editors

1. In November 2006, a Medix poll showed that 52% of GPs did not plan to upload their patients' data without prior consent – just 13% said they would upload without any consent at all. A Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust survey released in the same month showed that 53% of patients oppose 'Requiring everyone's medical records to be stored in a centralised database for access by civil servants and government officials, with no right to opt out'. Just 27% of the public were in favour.
2. The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, angered doctors by asking them to shop dissenting patients to the Department of Health, in breach of patients' privacy
3. In 1998, the Icelandic Medical Association opposed an attempt by the government there to build a central medical database, by providing opt-out leaflets in surgeries. 11% of the population opted out, and eventually the database scheme was made opt-in instead. That resolved the political and ethical problems.

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