

# ANALYSIS

## Commentary: UK general practice moves to open notes to patients

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Patients enrolled with the Haughton Thornley Medical Centres in East Manchester have been able to get full online access to their general practice records since 2005. We have used access to records as a foundation for developing a “partnership of trust” with our patients.<sup>1</sup> When the patient can see the same information as the clinician, it can foster a more equal relationship and lead to improved care.

Our experience has shown that it is not sufficient to simply provide patients with viewing rights. They need to understand the content of their records too. This has been helped by adopting an explicit consent model ([www.htmc.co.uk/GetAccessNow](http://www.htmc.co.uk/GetAccessNow)), which they sign up to before we open their notes to them. We also seek to promote understanding and use of medical information through our practice based web portal ([www.htmc.co.uk](http://www.htmc.co.uk)). This was designed and developed with patients and their carers. The resources it provides include information that has been coproduced by patients and staff as well as information about local services. Over the past eight years the number of patients with open access to their records has risen steadily, and currently 32% (3776) have access. We

have supported patients and families from disadvantaged backgrounds and ethnic minority groups to sign up for online services. Of the 3776 patients who currently have access to their full records, 433 are Bengali and eight have learning difficulties. Testimonials from patients suggest they value access and use records actively.<sup>2</sup>

Competing interests: I have read and understood BMJ policy on declaration of interests and have no relevant interests to declare.

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- 1 Hannan A, Webber F. Towards a partnership of trust. In: *Medical and care computing* 4. IOS Press, 2007:108-16.
- 2 Shah SG, Fitton R, Hannan A, Fisher B, Young T, Barnett J. Accessing personal medical records online: a means to what ends? *Int J Med Inform* 2015;84:111-8.

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