

Is your GP empathetic to your health

condition?

If your GP isn't, then you may wish to consider finding another GP that is more empathetic and communicative, and who may not have an axe to grind about not recognising or treating your health condition.

Our GP's are the 'gatekeepers' to all our NHS services. In addition, quite often, they are written to by an organisation, such as an employer or benefits agency, in order to verify and assess your health status. If your GP does not believe that you have a real health condition, this prejudice can both have a consequential negative impact on the provision of your health care within the NHS, and the speed at which it is supplied, as well as access to assistance and consideration, outside of the NHS.

My GP had a very negative attitude to M.E. and in fact went red and started spluttering and shaking and shouting when my physiotherapist sent her a report suggesting that my symptoms bore all the hallmarks of M.E. There were over 2 months of delays in correspondence and blood tests with an accredited M.E. clinic, which subsequently confirmed the diagnosis. In talking with fellow M.E. sufferers, I am aware, as probably you are, of the many similar and worse horrific experiences of fellow sufferers with their GP's. This still appears to be more the norm than the exception.

I also know that in our anxieties, we worry about 'better the devil that we know, rather than the devil that we don't know' and are wary of changing our GP.

Of course, in changing your GP, you, like myself may wish to do it at a strategic time, in order to reduce any logistical impacts in your health care. In addition, I asked around, in order to find

out if there was a GP in my area that was known to be especially empathetic to my disability. The closest that I could find was that, whilst they were not against it existing, their knowledge was not too deep. My support group has completed and maintains a list of empathetic GP's.

You may wish to try and find out if your local support group maintains a similar list. In any case, it does no harm to ask around of anybody that you know that may have a similar condition to you or know somebody that is a sufferer.

I was fortunate in that, for another medical matter, I had at short notice, a need to see a GP and mine was not available, and so was given an appointment with another GP in the same practice. He was very communicative in comparison, and did not behave as if he knew it all and always answered my questions and explained matters. This was already an improvement. With his permission, I decided to switch to him being my official registered GP and have updated all NHS departments and outside organisations.

I admit that this was a cautious step in preventing my medical records going back into the general system, when transferring to a totally new surgery, as I was anxious about forthcoming specialist health appointments and reports becoming compromised, or further delays being triggered.

On another issue, inevitably, once diagnosed and through your own personal experience of the many symptoms, you will always know more about your condition than your GP, unless they have a very special interest, have it themselves, or a close family member of theirs has it. M.E. is now only discussed with my GP in the same manner as my Rheumatoid Arthritis condition, when either he or I feel that it is relevant to any symptom, or treatment.