Dear

**Re: The marketing of our personal health data**

I am deeply concerned that, unbeknown to the public, individual NHS organisations, such as GP practices and hospital Trusts, are being strongly encouraged to set up ‘data sharing partnerships’ that will provide third parties, including private companies, with access to patients’ health data. Not only this, but sharing data will be ‘*as default’* and with a view to NHS organisations gaining some kind of reward.

Moreover, data sharing will be based on agreements steered by the Centre for Improving Data Collaboration, an NHS England department that urges quick deals made primarily in the data users’ interests, rather than those of the NHS, on the basis that this will help innovation and therefore economic growth. Results from partnerships may be commercialised and sold in national and/or international markets.

A range of well designed, cross-sectional studies show that most people are happy to share their health data with NHS researchers – i.e. when research is wholly in the public interest - but are extremely wary about such access to their personal data being given to profit-driven companies. And yet the vast majority of the public are completely unaware that their health data is to be shared ‘as default’ and used commercially without their knowledge. Should this become widely known, it is likely to lead to a significant loss of trust, prompting many people to ‘opt out’ of data sharing. As the current blanket ‘opt out’ stands, this would unfortunately mean also having to ‘opt out’ of research and development that is wholly in the public interest.

I attach a briefing paper from Keep Our NHS Public that provides more information and I urge you, as my MP to

* raise questions in the House on this matter, and
* call for an inquiry into
  + the legal and ethical basis of this ‘data grab’,
  + the complete lack of transparency and discussion before the decision was made to share our data with commercial companies ‘as default’, and
  + the status of, and choice available to ‘opt out’ of specific types of data sharing.

Yours etc