When ministers lose court cases, they should not just change the law to suit their purposes. After losing twice, this is what Mr Hunt is attempting to do.

Please add your name to the petition: secure.38degrees.org.uk/hands-off-our-hospitals

Ian Palmer, by email
www.38degreess.org.uk

UK BIOBANK IS AN OPT-IN MODEL FOR THE SHARING OF MEDICAL RECORDS

Thank you for the excellent coverage of the botched plans to share data from our medical records through the care.data database.

As JB Winger writes (Letters February 12), rather than having to write to our GPs and request that we opt out of the sharing of this information, we should be invited to opt in to these arrangements. Our consent should never be assumed.

My GP asked me some time ago if I would be interested in joining the registered charity UK Biobank (www.ukbiobank.ac.uk) and helping with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of serious illnesses.

I readily signed up, filled in health questionnaires and went for tests. UK Biobank recruited 500,000 people aged between 40 and 69 in 2006-10 to take part in its project. We have provided blood, urine and saliva samples for future analysis, detailed information about ourselves and agreed to have our health followed. This information will build into a powerful resource for researchers.

I read in my latest UK Biobank newsletter that almost 900 researchers have registered with the charity and agreed to have our health followed.

Thousand more researchers can be expected to use it in the coming years as the information it includes becomes increasingly detailed.

UK Biobank is surely a preferred model for the sharing of medical records than the discredited care.data scheme.

Joy Davis, by email

ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS FILL THE GAP BETWEEN CARE AND BILLING

Our medical records contain information that is of great value to private companies such as banks and insurance companies, so the care.data platform is a potentially invaluable resource (Letters January 22, February 5, 12, 19 and 26).

Leading research and consulting firm GlobalData (www.globaldata.com) says the market value for electronic medical records (EMRs) in the United States will increase from £6.36 billion in 2012 to £10.2 billion by 2017.

The company’s report states that EMRs can ‘provide opportunities to enhance productivity, capture profits and improve clinical outcomes’.

In the US, this growth is due to incentives offered under the American Relief and Recovery Act of 2009, which enables providers to digitise paper-based data and share this across the entire care industry, bridging the gap between clinical information and ‘handling diverse billing needs’.

Where the US leads in linking care and billing, we are sure to follow.

Liam Scully, London

WELFARE REFORMS AND CUTS ARE HITTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

I am pleased a number of religious leaders have spoken out about their concerns that the government’s welfare reforms are punishing the poor, leaving more and more people destitute.

Government policies have destroyed a safety net of social security for many, and it is a disgrace that so many people have to rely on food banks.

We have heard little about the horrendous welfare reforms and cutbacks that are causing a great deal of suffering and distress to people with disabilities and their families.

I would caution the coalition government that it risks alienating itself from more and more disadvantaged people, and particularly the unpaid carers who save the UK taxpayer billions of pounds every year.

Ken Mack, by email

TWEETS OF THE WEEK

Are you a nurse or doctor worried about wilful neglect crime? Maybe this section of Gov proposal will help: pic.twitter.com/lnY3IWEULY

@ShaunLintern

I make no apology for being outraged that I am still being told by carers they feel support is inadequate or not at all supportive #dementia

@lucyjmarsters

Complex story but truly shocking: Man starved after benefits were cut: tinyurl.com/o5xgh2c #Atos

@patrickjbutler

John McDonnell MP says that if society knew about the suffering that cuts were causing disabled people, they would be up in revolt #WOWdebate2014

@WNSNews

Do you see technology as part of the problem or part of the solution in getting joined-up services? http://ow.ly/u64iD #gdntech

@TheKingsFund

Had an anxiety dream last night, 1 patient fell, 1 needed O2 desperately, 1 choked on meds night, 1 patient fell, 1 needed O2 and they kept arriving from A&E

@AbbeyNHS

Pledge to always talk directly to the patient: http://bit.ly/1pxpnno – @scope has #NHSCheangeDay

@NHScqnday

Follow Nursing Standard @NScomment ♻ and join the #NScomment chat on Thursdays at 12.30pm

NURSING STANDARD