

Docs for Docs – A personal perspective  
*Or*  
“Why YOU too, need a GP”  
Dr Gary Kilov

The discussion surrounding the need for doctors to have their own GPs has received increasing attention and debate in recent years. For me, this issue has personal relevance and significance.

I would like to make a case for every GP to seek out and find a GP for themselves.

Since I have been a type I diabetic for almost twenty years, I have been managing my own diabetes in a rather ad-hoc manner, with the occasional, infrequent specialist consultations.

In recent years, however, I have experienced a range of atypical symptoms for which I consulted the relevant ‘ologist. Whilst they were quite expert in their own narrow field, when drawn out of their comfort zones a little they either floundered, showed complete disinterest, or worse, faked it.

A little over a year ago, I diagnosed myself with coeliac disease, confirmed by serology and small bowel biopsy. I was also found to have a wide range of co-morbidities associated with malabsorption, such as osteoporosis, multiple vitamin (D, B12 etc), iron and other deficiencies.

With the benefit of hindsight, many of the symptoms I had been suffering were due to the coeliac disease and have all resolved since I have adhered to a gluten free diet.

Dealt with in isolation, and viewed through the myopic view of a specialist, the symptoms made little sense, whilst together they represented a malabsorption syndrome.

A more global view, that is the unique skill of the GP, may have brought the problem to light sooner. I made the decision to find a GP to help me deal with the complexities, both physical and emotional, of dealing with the revelation that I had been living with a disease and its associated sequelae for most of my life - a disease, the effects of which could have been avoided, by simply adhering to a gluten free diet.

I saw a veritable panel of experts to deal with the assorted issues brought to light. However, this time it was under the guidance of, and in collaboration with, my GP. His support and assistance were invaluable. We pooled our knowledge and resources and I believe achieved the optimal outcome for me.

This experience highlighted for me the broad knowledge and diverse skills that GPs have and the invaluable role that a GP plays in the co-ordination and rationalisation of medical care.

General practice is not the Cinderella of medicine but a true sub-specialty. We need to respect ourselves and trust our colleagues. By all means be an expert/informed patient, but become a patient. Find a GP you are comfortable with and trust to take an objective, professional and sympathetic overview of your health needs. It was a very important decision for me; it might be for you too.