

January 9, 2009

Thank You ...from a once young GP

Once I was a young 26 year old GP full of enthusiasm, full of youthfulness, energy, idealistic values. Just as I was finding my feet in my *new* practice, enjoying my *new* post, meeting *new* friends and patients, contributing to a thriving business in *new* and different ways, *New Labour* came in. Since then it's been downhill all the way.

No, no, I'm not being fair, there was initial promise: the huge increase in funding into the NHS, and the release of the first few NSFs, at last it seemed like some real investment in care. But then 'fundholding' was disbanded with a move towards 'commissioning' that was without guidance and without a goal – a clear move to just be rid of something merely because it was part of the old regime, without a thought for what to do once it was destroyed. That should have given us a clue as to what *New Labour* could and would do to the NHS.

And since then it has definitely been downhill all the way from this government, directionless, expensive and time consuming change for change's sake, and top-down change at that. Mindless targets, expansive management and, most damaging of all to a profession that needs trust to perform its function in society, unrelenting and barely disguised contempt.

Now I'm getting to be a middle aged GP, I'm asking what is so wrong with this picture? Where is my enthusiasm? Where is my energy? Where have my idealistic values gone? Where am I? As I approach my 40th birthday, I realise I have many to thank for bringing me to this point in my working life.

Firstly,

Thank you to *New Labour*, for filling my mouth with gold, then taking it all away again, yet managing to make me unhappier in my work than I was before I had any gold. Thank you to *New Labour*, for the mess that you have made with society, the results of which my profession, and those allied with it, have to deal with on a daily basis and will have to deal with for years to come. Thank you to *New Labour* for making my 14 years' experience as a General Practitioner count for not a jot, and for actually making me more of a firefighter than a doctor. Thank you to *New Labour* for degrading my work into a series of check boxes, protocols and targets, mixed up with needless bureaucracy and a free entry into a popularity contest.

Thank you to the Media, for believing all the propaganda without an ounce of journalistic integrity or even basic research. Thank you to the Media for simply relaying the 'news', rather than responsibly and critically reporting upon it. Thank you to the Media for promoting a world of hype, mistrust, disbelief and loathing.

Thank you to my Profession, and in particular my Profession's leaders, for selling me down the river, oarless *and* boatless, in so many varied and increasingly novel ways. Thank you to my Profession, for negotiating a contract that gave with one hand yet took more away with another (and I'm not talking financial here). Thank you to my Profession, for not standing up for yourselves in solidarity, in the face of a weak but noisy bully. Thank you to my Profession, for training me, all those long years, to assess patient needs, and yet, when government calls, asking me to acquiesce to patient wants.

Thank you to Dr Shipman, for single-handedly landing us all in the frying pan, trussed up like prize turkeys (excuse the mixing of my metaphors here); a frying pan from which we've still to fall.

Thank you to the Not Medically Qualified Healthcare Practitioners, for fulfilling an ill-thought need at a time of rock bottom (self-)/respect for the medical profession. Thank you to the Not Medically Qualified Healthcare Practitioners, who fill me with fear as I enter middle age, a time when I might actually start to need the services of the NHS.

Thank you to the PCT for micromanaging every aspect of my practice with outstanding and unrivalled zeal. Thank you to the PCT for trying to turn my own patients against me at every opportunity. Thank you to the Primary Care Trust for seemingly looking after yourself more carefully than you look after actual *Primary Care*.

But mainly,

Thank you to those individual Colleagues, who have been there at the end of a phone, cutting through all the artificial administrative and IT based barriers to give help with a patient when it was really needed. Thank you to those individual Colleagues, who continue to advocate for and provide their utmost care to their patients in the face of an obstructive organisation.

Thank you to my Team, my Staff and my Partners, for doing their best and for their unstinting dedication in continuing to provide the same quality service to patients despite the enormous pressures within and outwith the surgery. Thank you to my Team, my Staff and my Partners for putting up with my occasional rants, snarls and general grumpiness.

Thank you to my Patients for bearing with me all these years and for still trusting me despite all that is happening around. Thank you to my Patients for providing the tiny 10 minute window of normality from the insane world outside.

And finally,

Thank you to my Family, without whom I would not be here now (by this I mean at work earning a crust, not dead, in case any passing GMC affiliates reading this think I'm suicidal).

Thank you. Thank you all.

Only 20 years to go now...