"I'm going to tell you a sorry tale…………
A few years ago, I was very ill indeed. This began with a purely physical problem with my right eye. The other health problems came as a result of neglect and mismanagement of my treatment by medical personnel.

This began with my being put on high doses of strong steroids. These disagreed with me, very much so, and I repeatedly asked to be taken off them, but was told that if that happened, I could risk major organ failure. So I was kept on them, for a long time. I later discovered that steroids are known to potentially lead to depression, as, in my case, they eventually did. Only after a succession of other health problems along the way. Each of these problems was dealt with separately, or not dealt with at all. I was repeatedly told that what was happening at any time was ‘A usual side-effect of steroids’ Maybe so – but not when there are so many of them!

My records were in the local optician’s, my G.P.’s surgery, some were in the Balfour, and some were in the Raigmore hospital in Inverness. I very much felt that I was being treated as a series of symptoms, rather than as a complete person. The fact that my records were dispersed between different places, exacerbated this problem. One example being the link between the aforementioned steroids and depression. If the specialist from Inverness had checked my records before putting me on massive doses of steroids, he would have seen that I had already suffered with two bouts of depression in my life, and might have re-considered his prescription. He has since said that lessons have been learnt, on his part.

So, long story short. I very much feel that, if my records had been available, and consulted, at each hospital/surgery I went to, that might have avoided what turned out to be a truly horrible experience for me and my husband, who had the task of looking after me through it all. Putting all your eggs in one basket, isn’t always a good idea, as, what happens if that basket is lost? But, with today’s technology it should be possible to have all the ‘eggs’ in one basket, and also have them in separate baskets, as back-up. And why am I baring my soul to the reader in this way? So that, if you are in a similar situation, where you feel that you are being treated for different things, in different places, by different people, who are not putting the information together as needed to benefit your treatment – make a fuss. At the time, I was too un-well, my husband – God love him – was too busy trying to cope with everything, so we didn’t make enough fuss, until I crashed – and I really did crash – big time.
When I was recovering enough to face doing so, we involved as many people as we could think of, to try to ensure that this kind of thing did not happen to anyone else. Our local MP, Alistair Carmichael, was very supportive, and our MSP, Liam McArthur was very, very helpful, meeting with folk at the Balfour to try to ensure that things were tightened up generally.

That’s my tale – or a shortened version of it. If you are in a similar situation, make a fuss – NOW. Insist on changing surgery, if necessary – that was the beginning of an improvement for me. Bring in anyone you can who will help to make changes. And, for the official folk – this needs looking at, seriously. All that information should have been and could have been available at the click of a button on a computer. Please – do something about it. My husband put together a dossier of what happened, which should be available from my ‘new’ GP, or, we have a copy if you want to see it. It is, indeed, a sorry tale, I am much recovered, but damage has been done, which I don’t think will ever go away, and I firmly believe that much of it could have been avoided if there had been a bit more thought, consultation, perusal and consolidation of my records along the way. In fact, the depression turned out to be the worst part of it. I learnt to deal with pain and discomfort, but despair is very, very hard to deal with.

By the by – that medication must have cost the NHS a lot of money – not only wasteful, but actively harmful."