

## The 'heartsink patient' (or 'Falling down the rabbit hole')

I suspect I am now becoming what doctors call a 'heartsink patient'. Why? Put simply...because I am dealing with a 'heartsink health service'. I doubt I need to give you details, anyone, whether in the UK or abroad, knows all too well what happens when you go from being a

**person**

to being a

**patient..**

.you enter into a sort of alternative universe, an Alice in Wonderland world full of looking glass people and situations.

There are the peculiar treatments ('eat me' and 'drink me') that dull the senses and confuse the mind. There are healthcare professionals who say one thing and then another. There are bureaucratic hoops to jump through. And there are the periods of seemingless endless waiting...

The result : you can retreat like the dormouse in Alice in Wonderland, or you can become more assertive, which of course, can be easily misinterpreted by those whose help you seek, and you start to provoke the 'heartsink' feeling when they see you.

I hope I'm wrong. I hope the healthcare professionals I am relying on to help me still see **me** not just a patient.

As individuals, they all seem to want sincerely to help. They are working in a system that is over-stretched and under-resourced. As a doctor myself, I know how hard it is to work the way one really wants to within the constraints of the health service.

So there is no-one particularly at fault here, but I still feel like I've fallen down the rabbit hole!