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Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

Would my hon. Friend accept that such a database could be set up anyway, without this Bill, and that what is really needed if we are to record medical innovations is adequate funding? This does not require legislation.

.......... Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

My hon. Friend has quoted a number of organisations. Does he accept that all those organisations oppose the Bill? He needs to make that explicit to the House. It is not fair to quote the Royal College of Surgeons, for example, without making it clear that it has explicitly opposed this Bill.

............... Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee 10:14 am, 16th October 2015

As with any book, we should not judge a Bill by its cover. All Members want to improve access to innovative medical treatments, but I sincerely believe that the Bill is not the right way forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) referred to a number of organisations, implying that they are in favour of the Bill, but he knows that the overwhelming majority of research and charitable organisations are ranged against it. It is opposed by the Association of Medical Research Charities, whose membership reads like an “A to Z” of expertise, including bodies such as Cancer Research UK, the Wellcome Trust—the list is very long, so I will not detain the House by reading it out. The Academy of Medical Sciences opposes the Bill, as does the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, including all those he quoted in his speech.

The General Medical Council, the British Medical Association and the Patients Association oppose the Bill, and I direct my hon. Friend to their article in The Guardian. Action against Medical Accidents, and even the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, oppose the Bill because of its unintended consequences. Legal experts, including Sir Robert Francis, firmly oppose the Bill. All those organisations oppose the Bill because it is unnecessary, it is unworkable, it would unravel important patient protections and, most importantly, it would have unintended and dangerous consequences for research.

I pay tribute to all the Bill’s sponsors and absolutely understand that they are motivated by very good intentions. I would love to sit down and work with them on how we genuinely improve access to innovative treatments. I hope they understand that I oppose the Bill because I sincerely believe that it is the wrong way forward.

The Secretary of State already has the power, as the hon. Member for Lewisham East
(Heidi Alexander) pointed out, to set up a register of innovative treatments, so we simply do not need that provision. We also do not need the heavy hand of legislation. We do need a register, but it needs to be set up by the research bodies themselves and to be adequately funded. We absolutely need transparency. There is a danger that we will misunderstand the science.

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