

Clarification from Dr William Weir

Margaret Williams 7th December 2010

Dr William Weir, Consultant Physician of 10, Harley Street, London W1G 9PF (who specialises in ME/CFS) wishes to correct the statement made in an article in The Guardian on 4th December 2010 by the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper MP. In an interview ("There's nothing better than politics"), Yvette Cooper MP is quoted as saying about the time she suffered from ME: "... But my consultant did say that over 90% [of ME patients] made a full recovery, and it never came back. It's one of those things you hope people suffering from it now will realise..." (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/dec/04/yvette-cooper-guardian-interview>).

It is in the public domain that Yvette Cooper's consultant was Dr William Weir, since Ms Cooper herself made this information public in an interview about her illness in the Daily Mail about ten years ago.

Dr Weir is concerned about this statement in two respects: (1) he did not give Ms Cooper such advice and (2) it is untrue that 90% of ME/CFS patients make a full recovery. Dr Weir points out that the statistic Ms Cooper is probably (mis)quoting is "*Of those who recover, 90% tend to do so in the first year of the illness*", but in those who remain unwell after the first year, there is a lesser tendency towards recovery.

It should be said that at the All Party Parliamentary Group on ME (APPGME) meeting held on 21st October 2009 in Committee Room 21 at the House of Commons, Ms Cooper was made aware of the many problems faced by people with ME/CFS in relation to the Department for Work and Pensions, specifically the way in which a patient's own GP and specialist were progressively being removed from the opinion-gathering process and replaced by doctors who know nothing of the patient's medical background and even less about ME/CFS.

In response, she noted these concerns but did not indicate that there would be any shift in the DWP position (ME Association summary of APPGME meeting: <http://tinyurl.com/ycnw6q5>).