

For Clarification

Margaret Williams 19th November 2015

Following the recent publication of a document by Dr David Tuller (who referred to Margaret Williams as “Margaret Weston”), to avoid confusion and any misunderstanding, Margaret Williams explains why she used the name “Margaret Weston” in her dealings with the WHO. For ease of understanding, it is written in the third person.

Dr David Tuller was correct in stating that it was “Margaret Weston” who contacted the WHO and who on 23rd January 2004 received important written evidence from Andre L’Hours: *“This is to confirm that according to the taxonomic principles governing the Tenth Revision of the World Health Organization’s International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) it is not permitted for the same condition to be classified to more than one rubric as this would mean that the individual categories and subcategories were no longer mutually exclusive”*.

Margaret Williams decided not to use that name in her dealings with the WHO for one reason only: the name “Margaret Williams” was already being “blacked” by certain people and she wished to avoid having her request for information refused by the WHO so, knowing of the involvement of certain people in the UK with the classifications department at the WHO and of their determination to remove ME from the neurological diseases chapter, she felt it advisable to use a different name.

Both Professor Malcolm Hooper and Margaret Williams have been subjected to numerous threats and intimidations over the years: on one occasion, Professor Hooper was physically threatened in person by a well-known CFS researcher who was very angry indeed at what Professor Hooper had published (albeit that it was true); Professor Hooper had to duck to avoid being physically injured. It is a matter of record that, when Professor Hooper was invited to address the Scottish Parliament, determined attempts were made by a medical practitioner in England to prevent him from doing so.

Examples of attempts to silence Professor Hooper and his team

1. The unwarranted retraction of Professor Hooper’s paper in the Journal of Clinical Pathology (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis: a review with emphasis on key findings in biomedical research: J Clin Pathol 2007;60:466-471)

The determination of certain people to destroy Professor Hooper’s reputation and credibility is astonishing, one of the more disturbing attempts being the secretive and

unauthorised retraction of his paper that was published in the Journal of Clinical Pathology in 2007.

The word “retraction” has a formal meaning and has global implications: retraction of a published paper is a very serious matter because it discredits the author(s) and has lasting adverse consequences on their reputation.

On 31st July 2006 Professor Hooper had received confirmation of acceptance of his article for publication by the journal in an email from Dr Runjan Chetty, Editor-in-Chief, who wrote that he would *“like to fast-track the publication of your article”*. Everything proceeded as normal and the article was duly published in May 2007.

It is extraordinary to “pull” a published paper without discussion between the editor and the author(s) but on this occasion that did not happen. The first that Professor Hooper knew about its retraction was a posting on 2nd July 2008 on the Co-Cure international mailing list (obtained from the J Clin Pathol website, which said: *“Source: Journal of Clinical Pathology Vol 61 #7, p 880; July 2, 2008: The following article, published in the May 2007 issue of the journal, has been retracted: Hooper M. Myalgic encephalomyelitis: a review with emphasis on key findings in biomedical research. J Clin Pathol 2007;60:466-471”*).

Since this was news to Professor Hooper, the journal was approached by Margaret Williams on his behalf for clarification and in the meantime, under the auspices of Stephen Ralph of MEAction UK, on 5th July 2008 a statement was published on the Co-Cure mailing list: *“Please note: The title of Dr Marc-Alexander Fluks’ Co-Cure posting of 2 July 2008 ‘Hooper retracts CFS paper’ is misleading as Professor Hooper has NOT in fact retracted his paper....There is presently some confusion as to what exactly is going on at the JCP regarding this matter but Professor Hooper categorically states: ‘I wish it to be known that I have NOT retracted my Journal of Clinical Pathology paper on ME biomedical research; I have no intention of doing so; I have had no official communication from the JCP on this matter and am currently seeking clarification’”*.

The article was also removed from PubMed.

This all happened at a time when Professor Hooper was an expert witness in the Judicial Review of the NICE Guideline on CFS: could it have been nothing but coincidence that if he were shown to have been publicly humiliated by the retraction of his paper, this would inevitably discredit anything he said to the High Court, either in his Witness Statement or in oral evidence?

Medical scientists who supported Professor Hooper were astounded and dismayed, one of them (a well-published Senior Research Fellow) saying he had never known anything like this throughout his professional life, as the only time a published article can be retracted is if it has been shown that the author is crooked, and this whole matter was very suspicious, because (quote) *“Retracting a paper does not happen by mistake”*.

On Tuesday 8th July 2008 Margaret Williams spoke to Julie Solomon at the journal, telling her that academics up and down the country were mystified and were asking what the journal was up to, as Professor Hooper had not been contacted, and that it was important to stop the internet furore about the situation. Margaret Williams was asked for her home telephone number, which was to be given to the journal's lawyers so that they could contact her directly.

During intense discussions, Margaret Williams was told that (quote) *"We've been trying to figure out what's going on – we can't find a paper trail....It seems to be fine.... I don't think it should be retracted – the version published was the same version that our lawyers approved before publication....We don't know where that information about retraction has come from....It should not have happened"*.

On 9th July 2008 Margaret Williams again spoke to Julie Solomon, who confirmed that she had sent all the papers to their lawyers and they knew how serious the situation was; she also confirmed that the paper had been peer-reviewed, saying (quote) *"It's a very unfortunate situation"*. She promised to telephone Margaret Williams as soon as she knew what they were going to do about it.

That same day Margaret Williams received a telephone call from Jonathan Crusher, a partner at Messrs Farrer & Co of Lincoln's Inn Fields, London (who happen to be Her Majesty the Queen's lawyers); he was anxious to agree on the wording of a statement that was to be published by the journal. He confirmed that Professor Hooper's paper had not been retracted and that it retained its citation. He confirmed that once a statement had been agreed by Farrer & Co and by Professor Hooper and Margaret Williams (and also by Horace Reid, a committee member of the Northern Ireland ME Association, who was involved in the matter), an apology would be put out on the BMJ Publishing Group (which publishes the J Clin Pathol) and due attention would be drawn to it. He sent an email giving Margaret Williams his mobile telephone number and asking her to ensure that Professor Hooper contacted him before 9pm that same evening.

Just after 11 pm that night Professor Hooper sent Jonathan Crusher an email in which he wrote: *"Following our phone call I would suggest the following statement....This encapsulates the major points we discussed, particularly with the forthcoming Judicial Review in mind and the confusion and distress that the retraction notice has caused to many in the ME community. I agree that there is some urgency in posting the statement on the website together with the article to avoid any possible misunderstanding for subsequent viewers. I think the statement should be included in the next hard copy of the J Clin Pathol, thus providing a comprehensive coverage in all forms of the Journal"*.

Unfortunately there was not absolute agreement about the wording of the apology, so on 11th July 2008 Margaret Williams spoke to Jonathan Crusher, who maintained that the journal's (quote) *"house-style"* was important and the statement had to reflect it, so Professor Hooper's version needed to be *"slightly re-worded"*. Professor Hooper, Margaret Williams and Horace Reid had no choice but to sign – individually – their absolute agreement to what the lawyers proposed to publish, which effectively was a

form of “gagging” because they had to sign that they accepted the publication of the statement in full and final settlement of any claim they may have had against the BMJ, the Journal of Clinical Pathology and/or their officers and employees arising out of the publication of which they had complained.

The final version of the statement read: *“The BMJ Group wishes to inform readers that a series of technical errors resulted in the unjustified retraction of the article ‘Myalgic encephalomyelitis: review with emphasis on key findings in biomedical research’. The article’s citation details remain as originally published....The Journal of Clinical Pathology offers an unreserved apology to the author of the article, Professor Malcolm Hooper, and regrets any confusion or distress that may have been caused”.*

On 14th July 2008 Julie Solomon sent Margaret Williams an email saying: *“I’m writing to let you know that our staff are ‘on the case’ with regard to the retraction statement. We couldn’t proceed until we had approval from all 3 of the people involved....A print layout has been done already...Because our web hosts are based in California, there is an inevitable delay in processing changes, but they are aware that the matter is urgent....We all thank you for your patience”.*

Margaret Williams replied: *“Thank you. I’m sure you appreciate the reason for the concern is the potential impact the matter may have on Professor Hooper’s status as an expert witness in the current High Court action, so we’ll all be relieved when the statement appears”.*

On 15th July 2008 a message from Professor Hooper was published on www.meactionuk.org.uk : *“Attention is drawn to the recently-released apology from the Journal of Clinical Pathology regarding the alleged retraction of ‘Myalgic encephalomyelitis: a review with emphasis on key findings in biomedical research’ by Professor Malcolm Hooper. Professor Hooper notes that the immoderate and malicious comments which were posted on the internet regarding his paper have been shown to be false. He is saddened that such comments from those who profess to have the best interests of the ME community at heart have caused distress, dismay and confusion within the wider ME community”.*

Also on 15th July 2008 Julie Solomon sent Margaret Williams an email saying: *“I’m pleased to be able to tell you that the following has been done: The notification is on the homepage as a Special Feature; it is linked to the full statement, and the full statement is linked to the article itself; the ‘under revisions’ and associated text has been removed from the article navigation; the retraction has been removed from the July 2008 table of contents; the full statement is being printed in the September 2008 issue of the journal....this is to avoid it being indexed by PubMed and thus calling further attention to the error. We are waiting for PubMed to remove the retraction notice from their database”.*

However, PubMed refused to remove reference to the retraction from their database: on 27th August 2008 Julie Solomon from the journal sent an email to Professor Hooper, Margaret Williams and Horace Reid saying: *“We thought we should let you know that we have followed through with the National Library of Medicine (Medline/PubMed) as we said we would. To our surprise they disagreed with us with regard*

to how the retraction should be handled and have refused to remove reference to (it) from their site....We hope you understand that we have done everything in our power to minimise the impact of the error and to rectify it, but the NLM's decisions are not within our control".

Quite how a "series of technical errors" resulting in such an unjustified and secretive retraction (of which the editors said they were unaware) could arise over one year after publication remains within the knowledge only of those directly involved.

2. The Judicial Review of NICE's Clinical Guideline 53 on "CFS" in 2008-2009

In relation to the Judicial Review of the NICE Clinical Guideline 53, when Margaret Williams contacted NICE with legitimate queries, NICE began to log and monitor her telephone calls. Professor Peter Littlejohns, Clinical and Public Health Director of NICE, was immediately alerted and a strategy to block a Freedom of Information request was discussed within NICE. Their internal emails containing these details were appended to the Witness Statement of Stephen Hocking, a solicitor at Beachcrofts who were acting for NICE and the emails were presented to the Judge on the first day of the Hearing. It was notable that Margaret Williams' private telephone number was not redacted as it should have been.

In her enquires, Margaret Williams did not, as publicly alleged in a series of YouTube videos placed on the internet by Ciaran Farrell, use "*underhanded or 'nefarious' means of making inquiries of NICE, Beachcroft LLP and the Legal Services Commission*".

She used a pseudonym that she has used (and published under) numerous times in the past. The sole reason she did so was because she believed that if she used the name "Margaret Williams", NICE might possibly have heard of her and she would not receive the information being sought.

As many people know, her actions were open and legitimate, but were misrepresented to the court by NICE, and this misrepresentation was perpetuated by certain people and were aimed directly at discrediting her: the videos were not (as the author tried to persuade people) an impartial factual summary.

Stephen Hocking's witness statement was in no way a "*damning indictment of Margaret Williams*". Stephen Hocking represented NICE and he was not impartial. His witness statement simply demonstrated that NICE got their facts wrong and that their solicitor misled the High Court.

3. The refusal of the Chairman of NICE to consider Professor Hooper's complaint about its Clinical Guideline 53

Following the failure of the Judicial Review, on 19th February 2010 Professor Hooper sent a copy of his complaint to the Chairman of NICE, Professor Sir Michael Rawlins,

whom Professor Hooper knew personally, having collaborated with him in the past in developing a course in Pharmacokinetics. In his letter Professor Hooper wrote: *“I am a blast from your past....Despite the vast amount of biomedical literature going back to 1934 and the classification of ME as a neurological illness by the WHO since 1969, the official UK attitudes demonstrated by the MRC, DWP, Department of Health and to some extent your own organisation NICE (a) ignore all this evidence; (b) show an ideological commitment to a psychosomatic/behavioural model of the illness which is no longer tenable; (c) recommend only cognitive restructuring techniques that are ‘not remotely curative’; (d) proscribe any investigative tests to identify the disorder; (e) support cruel, even vicious, actions that lead to patients being wrongly sectioned....The result is that essential benefits and insurance payments to support patients and their families have not been paid....I would ask you in your role as Chairman of NICE to engage fully with our report and act accordingly to right the long-standing wrongs that people with ME have suffered for the last 20 years”.*

On 2nd March 2010 Professor Sir Michael Rawlins replied to Professor Hooper saying: *“I am not prepared to enter into any correspondence on this matter”.* He returned Professor Hooper’s report unopened.

In conclusion, the determination by certain medical practitioners known to be affiliated to the insurance and pharmaceutical industries who influentially advise UK Departments of State (and other so-called “independent” bodies including NICE) to suppress the evidence that ME is not psychogenic but biomedical in origin appears to be inviolable.

Mindful of how much evidence NICE and its lawyers chose to disregard and the extent to which the High Court Judge was misled by them (a statement which the Claimants believe to be easily demonstrable by the evidence that was submitted to the Court but withdrawn as a direct result of NICE’s threat to seek an Order for wasted costs personally on the Claimants’ lawyers, an Order which was readily imposed by the Judge at £50,000), is it coincidental that it has been said on the internet about the Judicial Review that perjury is a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment except when it supports Government policy?