

“Callous Disregard”

Margaret Williams 26th June 2010

Attention is drawn to the recently published book “Callous Disregard” by Dr Andrew Wakefield MB, BS, FRCS, FRCPath because, although not about ME/CFS, the continued denials of provable facts he meticulously details are so familiar to those with ME/CFS.

Its subtitle is “Autism and Vaccines – The Truth Behind a Tragedy” and it provides hitherto unseen evidence that the UK Government chose to continue (indeed actively to promote) an immunisation programme which it knew may have been potentially dangerous to an incalculable number of children.

The book is published by Skyhorse Publishing (info@skyhorsepublishing.com). Notably, it carries a stark warning in the form of a “**NOTE TO ALL CUSTOMERS**”, printed in large bold font and boxed for maxim impact: “**NOT FOR SALE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**”.

Following the decision of the UK General Medical Council to remove Dr Wakefield’s name from the medical register, on 7th June 2010 Dr James Le Fanu wrote in the Daily Telegraph:

“It is not necessary to be a conspiracy theorist to recognise that the General Medical Council’s recent ruling to strike professors Andrew Wakefield and John Walker-Smith off the register had the fingerprints of the medical establishment all over it. They had, it was alleged, brought the medical profession into disrepute by showing a callous disregard to the children in the (in)famous study investigating the possible role of the MMR vaccine in inducing a regressive variant of autism associated with severe bowel symptoms.

“But this charge against them, as everyone knows, cannot possibly be true.

“It seems only sensible...to reserve judgment about the GMC’s verdict and to speculate what lay behind it.

“...it is perhaps not unreasonable to detect the hidden hand of those powerful forces for whom the crushing of a professional reputation is a price worth paying for the continuation of the ever-expanding child immunisation programme”.

Indeed, Wakefield provides evidence of the extremes to which the pharmaceutical industry seems prepared to go; citing an internal memo from the pharmaceutical giant Merck in relation to the drug Vioxx, Wakefield shows how Merck talked of having to “neutralise” dissent from doctors who questioned the safety of the drug and he quotes the text of an e-mail from Merck which reads: “We may need to seek them out and destroy them where they live”. Wakefield observes on page 4: “It would seem that rather than being conspiracy theory, this can sometimes be corporate policy”.

Wakefield documents the factual evidence in an impressively concise manner that seems to leave no possible doubt that the UK medical establishment and those who work within it (including the Chief Medical Officer, the Dean of a Medical School, the Director of Immunisation at the Department of Health, child psychiatrists and the editor of a medical journal) had no compunction in ensuring that not only Big Pharma but a Department of Her Majesty’s Government should not be in the firing line of litigation, a financial and political threat that was to be circumvented no matter what the cost.

Evidence is presented in the book that access to information was controlled by those with vested interests; that disproportionate influence was wielded by a few individuals; that “some of the key people in this may not stop at anything”; that the Dean of a Medical School lied under oath; that the editor of The Lancet played a sustained and significant role in the vilification of Dr Wakefield and was determined publicly to wash his hands of his part in the publication of the original Lancet paper by Wakefield (it is of interest that on 1st July 2003, Crispin Davis, Chairman of Reed-Elsevier, The Lancet’s proprietor and the editor’s boss, was made a non-executive director of Glaxo SmithKline, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world and manufacturers of the MMR vaccine and that in the summer of 2004, Davis was knighted for his services). Indeed, the editor of The Lancet advised the GMC about ways to discredit Andrew Wakefield and was one of the key prosecution witnesses at the trial.

It is clear that many people were subjected to considerable political pressure from the Department of Health and the World Health Organisation and the reader is left in no doubt that children’s welfare was subverted because of a secret that threatened Government’s interests.

The book carries an Afterword co-written with James Moody entitled “Ethics, Evidence and the Death of Medicine”, from which the following extract is taken:

“The GMC findings have dire consequences for the practice of medicine generally...and for the future of the GMC in its role of protecting patients. Doctors...will settle in to the safe mediocrity of doling out medicine ‘by the books’. Medicine will no longer be a learned profession but just a series of rote steps performed mechanically and utterly without inspiration. Patients’ care will suffer...”.

This is a compelling and immensely disturbing book which every medical student and registered medical practitioner – as well as every parent -- should be obliged to read.