

**Comment on Article: "PLOS ONE issues editor's note over controversial chronic fatigue syndrome research" in Retractionwatch.com,
16 December 2015**

<http://retractionwatch.com/2015/12/16/plos-one-issues-editors-note-over-disputed-chronic-fatigue-research/>

by Margaret Williams

December 17, 2015

Professor Peter White is claiming that he promised to keep patients' data securely; has he forgotten that some of this data was not held securely? The following extract comes from "Magical Medicine: How to make a disease disappear" (p256):

<http://www.meactionuk.org.uk/magical-medicine.pdf>

On 31st March 2006 Peter White wrote to the West Midlands Multi-centre Research Ethics Committee to inform them of the theft of a digital audio recording (DAR) of GET sessions from Centre 03 (which is King's College, ie. Trudie Chalder's Centre). This confidential information was stolen from an unlocked drawer in the therapists' office. Peter White informed West Midland MREC that: "There are no lockable cabinets in any of the therapists' rooms so the drawer was not locked" (cf SSMC Participant Information Sheet).

His letter continued: "The burglary was reported to Southwark police on the day that it happened, which was Wednesday 22nd March 2006. The crime number is 3010018-06. The therapist was away on leave 22nd-24th March and therefore the DAR was not found to be missing until Monday 27th March 2006". It was only after the theft that Professor Trudie Chalder sought advice on how to secure the data properly.

The letter also said: "The Principal Investigator for this centre, Professor Trudie Chalder, is awaiting advice from the Trust R&D as to whether the affected participants should be made aware of the theft".

The same letter stated that recordings were being downloaded to CD only on a monthly basis, a working methodology that is not compatible with the promises of confidentiality set out in the "Invitation to join the PACE trial" leaflet.

The letter carries a handwritten annotation dated 13th April 2006: "Noted. Sad! No action needed". It seems that the patients involved were not warned that confidential information about them had been stolen.