

## MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THE WESSELY LECTURE AT GRESHAM COLLEGE.

By  
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A week does not pass by without a press release from the medical profession in which they astound us with some new it-is-believed "discovery". It is hard to escape the view that these are intended to remind the public the medical profession is the collective expert that is constantly vigilant and looking for answers on our behalf.

Some years ago, a psychologist fascinated the listeners of a radio interview by a moving description of the anguish experienced by new fathers who suffer post-natal depression and not long ago, I learnt that if a newborn has a large head, it is likely to suffer asthma in the future. No one ever mentioned if there was a connection.

Memorable in this area of medical "discoveries", was the bouncy, jolly, (and clearly well-rested) doctor who, in retrospect, reminds me rather of Simon Wessely in more ways than one. About 20 years ago, this person appeared in a TV documentary to tell us that insomnia was all in the mind. We only *think* we need sleep, he said, when in fact, it has no necessary function whatsoever. Imagine a GP passing this message on to a patient who, in Wessely-speak, had an abnormal illness perception in his belief that being sleepless for weeks on end was a serious problem. How happy he must have felt to learn there was nothing wrong with him after all. And yet...and yet...why, as he tried to drive away, did he engage reverse gear instead of first and end up in a ditch?

And what about constipation? "I feel as if I am being poisoned, doctor." Well fiddle-dee-dee! That week's press release was just what the doctor ordered. It's perfectly normal for a person to have only one bowel motion a week, don't you know?

Getting down to the nitty gritty, medically treat the male post-natal depression, and you may end up with one very constipated and (as has been acknowledged by the FDA) possibly suicidal, dad; medically treat the insomniac and the chances are he'll become a drug addict with respiratory problems.

It's a mine field out there and the doctors have no more idea of how to get through it than the average punter.

Here in New Zealand, we sometimes say, "He's a real dag!" Meaning: Hey! What a character! But in farming parlance, dags are bunches of dried faecal matter adhering to the woolly backsides of the ovine species - known to most of us as sheep.

The farmer goes through the seasons of lambing, docking, shearing and, "Yep!" he says to his neighbour over their beers in the pub, "the wife's been sharpening up m' shears. We start daggin' tomorra!"

The reason I mention these seemingly inconsequential matters is that I have just had a quick skirmish with the transcript of Simon Wessely's recent lecture at Gresham College and these thoughts, for some strange reason, came flooding in. It was a quick skirmish because my eyes are so sensitive to light, that I can hardly look at the pages. I constructed a sort of box into which I put them so that, in photographic terms, my "film" would not get too over-exposed. Writing on the computer is easier because I can do that with my eyes closed a lot of the time. But then, as Simon would probably tell me, he could soon fix my "phobia" with a goodly measure of CBT along with daily doses of that constipating, suicide inducing stuff already mentioned. What a

clever bloke he is! Yep! A real dag's dag!

During my squinting at the papers in the box, I managed to pick up on a few points which I would like to address. However, for an expert critique on the lecture, I recommend the comments made by Professor Malcolm Hooper.

[http://www.meactionuk.org.uk/Professor\\_Hoopers\\_Comments\\_on\\_the\\_Gresham\\_College\\_lecture\\_by\\_Professor\\_Simon\\_Wessely.html](http://www.meactionuk.org.uk/Professor_Hoopers_Comments_on_the_Gresham_College_lecture_by_Professor_Simon_Wessely.html)

One of the first points Simon made, was that he was a little nervous because he had (quote): *"received some intimidatory threats suggesting that it would be wise for me not to give the lecture..."* Under these circumstances, some of those who attended the lecture were surprised that he brought along his son who apparently was very visible during the event. It would surely have been safer to leave the boy at home.

That aside, there is no doubt that Simon has the knack for upsetting a lot of people. It is not the first time he has claimed to have been threatened and the situation should be taken very seriously. But has an official investigation ever been undertaken? To my knowledge it hasn't. A member of the medical profession who arouses the ire and passion felt by citizens towards a reviled dictator is most unusual. I have never heard of anything like it before. Why then have the police not stepped in to properly investigate the situation? Why have they not interviewed those who threatened Simon and followed up on what they learnt from them? Why has this powder keg not been split wide open?

Could it be that there were, after all, no threats, or is there someone of rank who has a vested interest in keeping that powder keg securely intact? The official inaction in itself, raises a variety of questions.

Simon's comment that the first Gulf War was *"a great military success"* quite took my breath away. If the first Gulf War was *"a great military success"*, why is there currently a second Gulf War in progress? What Bush senior did not finish, Bush junior has taken on. One can almost hear him say, "Leave it to me, Daddy! Ah'll finish it for you."

And why not? After all: *"I'm the commander - see, I don't need to explain - I do not need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being president."* (From "Bush at War", Bob Woodward.) Follow that up with: *"I'm also not very analytical."*

*You know I don't spend a lot of time thinking about myself, about why I do things."* (Aboard Air Force One, June 4, 2003.)

Yes, Mr. President! A lot of us have noticed.

Here are a few quotes taken from news items: *"[The FBI] were prevented for political reasons from carrying out full investigations into members of the Bin Laden family in the US before the terrorist attacks of September 11"* (London Guardian, 7 November 2001)

*"Dick Cheney was Bush's Defense Secretary while Bush Sr. covertly armed and funded Hussein's military right up to the Kuwaiti invasion in August 1990, eventually leaving the American taxpayers holding \$2 Billion in defaulted Iraqi debt. Was Cheney simply 'out of the loop' or asleep at the wheel? Or something worse?..."* **American Politics Journal, 21 February, 2001**

(A Google search on Dick Cheney reveals some mind blowing stuff.)

*"The Pentagon has secretly built a germ factory capable of producing enough deadly bacteria to kill millions of people, it was revealed yesterday. The project is one of a number of covert biological initiatives pursued by the United States over recent years. One proposal awaiting final approval is to manufacture a more potent version of anthrax using genetically engineered"*

*biological agents. Last night, Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, confirmed that the Administration planned to proceed with these tests....* "Secret US germ tests threat to treaty" London Times, September 5, 2001

(A case of "Do as I say. Not as I do.")

How right Nelson Mandela was. *"It is extremely dangerous because they [Britain and the US] are introducing chaos into international affairs."* BBC News of 3 December, 2001.

Accounts such as these are a dime a dozen and if Simon believes these shenanigans amount to a great military success, then what credence can one place upon his medical opinions about the GWS which he describes as *"a bit of an academic point of little matter."*

As for linking vaccines administered to ill health effects, *"We could not do that because most of the records were destroyed....We are not going to look at those who don't have records because of the possibility of bias and memory."* How convenient is that? Others would have been inclined to ask some very difficult questions and to make a real fuss about such "carelessness". But Simon accepted it as if it were of no consequence. Is that the action of a researcher seeking the truth or the action of a "researcher" who has a vested interest in coming up with a pre-determined result?

Simon's "study" regarding the effects on the health of the armed forces was conducted through questionnaires which were compiled by himself and his team. It *"...took two years, and finally we achieved what we wanted to achieve. I won't go into details, but trust me."*

Let me fill in for Simon by supplying a little detail or two that hit me forcibly at the time the results of the study were announced. Phase 1 appeared in the BMJ 1 September, 2001. Quote: *'Those who believed they had Gulf War Syndrome were more likely to be of lower rank...and were less well educated....We adjusted for confounding factors that had the potential to distort the results - such as education, rank...'* Phase 2 indicated that the authors adjusted *"for potential confounding by age, sex, rank and marital status..."*

I guess that answers the question about pre-determined results. How easy to achieve what you want to achieve when you can *"adjust for confounding factors"*. One can but assume that the sick major was recorded as a sick corporal and the sick university graduate was entered into the records as a sick drop-out from a special needs class.

Trust Simon and his "study"? Mmm....M! I don't think so.

Do conflicts of interest enter the equation? Of course they do! Let me digress for just a moment.

Compare funding allocated to the research and treatment of GWS, ME, heart disease, cancer, diabetes etc to the current health scare about bird flu. This strain of flu has, on an international level, killed but a handful of people during the past two or three years. Compared to the annual deaths attributed to common conditions, bird flu doesn't even figure, yet governments have been panicked into setting aside millions and even billions of dollars to deal with a possible outbreak within their own borders. Who ignited this very real case of mass hysteria?

The facts are readily available on the internet and briefly, they are as follows: In 1996 Gilead Sciences Inc., a biotech firm and a NASDAQ listed stock company, developed and patented Tamiflu which, it is claimed, is the only effective treatment for bird flu. Some years ago and (remarkably) before the current flu reared its head, Gilead gave Hoffman-LaRoche the marketing rights in exchange for 10% of the profits. While the bird flu scare-mongering has afforded Gilead a handsome return on this basis, it is not surprising that they are currently trying to reclaim the marketing rights.

Donald Rumsfeld, now US Secretary of Defence, had been on the board of Gilead since 1988 and was named Chairman in 1997. He held this position until his Pentagon appointment in 2001. According to his federal financial disclosure records, he still holds a stake in Gilead valued at between \$US5 million and \$US25 million. The rush on stock-piling Tamiflu during the past six months has earned him at least \$US1 million. (For quick reference to the subject in Google Search, type in "rummy flu" and you'll find 99,000 entries.)

Put this together with (a) the convenience of a drug just looking for a disease to hang its cap on and (b) the fact that independent experts tell us that Tamiflu is useless as a treatment for bird flu in humans, and you have a very disturbing but very clear picture.

Even as Rumsfeld benefits from the mass hysteria over bird flu, so others in high places have benefited from business interests presented by the war in Iraq.

Simon himself, is not shy about admitting he has a number of conflicts of interest. He *is* shy however, about talking in terms of financial value. *"I have received 53 research grants from 20 sources...I have dealt with industry at many levels, as well as with people from various institutions that support research. All institutions have agendas and special interests..."* Read his letter in the BMJ, and you will see that he exhorts members of his profession to "grow up" and accept that conflicts of interest are here to stay.

<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/327/7410/341>

Simon holds a consultancy position not only within the UK MoD, but also within the US equivalent. Both organizations have a vested interest in covering up the facts about GWS.

Waffling on about the medical triumphs of the Gulf Wars and the absence of infectious diseases amongst the veterans is a diversionary strategy. Disease has moved in another direction. Man is no longer diseased through infectious agents alone. He is routinely diseased through the wide-spread use of toxins.

And while we are on the subject of toxins, remember the controversy over the use of unproven anthrax vaccine? Remember how George W. Bush, that great military strategist, boldly told the world that he would be first in line for his shot? How come he missed the photo op? If he had had that shot, we would all have heard about it and witnessed it on TV several times over.

Which brings me back to Simon. Isn't it time he put up or shut up? If he is so confident that depleted uranium, vaccines etc have no part in the physical disease that we have come to know as GWS, then like the person who discovered that Helicobacter Pylori causes gastric ulcers, let him put his money where his mouth is. Let him be his own guinea pig under the supervision of independent observers. Let him be vaccinated and exposed to depleted uranium and see how he reacts. But I guess the chance of him allowing that is most unlikely. Destroying the health and lives of others is one thing. Risking your own, takes guts.

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