

STATEMENT FROM MARGARET WILLIAMS

7th July 2006

It is rarely that I or my co-authors respond to the endless – often vicious -- public attacks from certain quarters upon our integrity because such attacks usually do not merit any response: people must judge for themselves whether what I and my co-authors offer for public consideration has any value. As what we say is always referenced and / or provable, that ought not to be difficult.

It is an inestimable pity that there is so much division and animosity within the ME community itself, since the only real battle is to get ME recognised as a devastating organic disorder, and the constant carping from some quarters undermines our efforts to place as much evidence and information as possible in the public domain so that there can be no excuse for the continued failure of Government and the medical insurance industry to disregard the evidence-base that already exists.

I note with no surprise that there is yet another public attempt to discredit me personally: on 6th July 2006 Colin Barton of IMEGA posted the following:

“Occasionally statements appear widely on the internet written by someone called ‘Margaret Williams’ who’s (*sic*) real name is apparently Kate Stuart. It is rather bazaar (*sic*) that someone should have to use a false name surely this discredits the person’s writings”. Mr Barton has been misinformed about my name: it is not “Kate Stuart”.

By Mr Barton’s standards, the writings of anyone who uses what he refers to as a “false” name are discredited.

He may wish to reflect on the fact that Ellen Goudsmit PhD has used pseudonyms that include “Kate Gardiner” when acting as Editor for InterAction (the magazine of MEAction, now known as AfME). If using a “false” name discredits the person’s writings, then many issues of InterAction must be discredited.

Another “false” name used by Miss Goudsmit is “Sarah David”; naturally there is evidence of this, should anyone require it to be proved.

Whilst on the subject of personal attacks, recently Kelly McLellan from the Edinburgh MESH publicly claimed that Marshall and Williams had scored what he termed another “own goal”, but despite being asked by various people to provide evidence of both a new “own goal” and of the previous “own goals” he failed to do so.

If we have made a mistake, or have got something materially wrong, we would appreciate being informed, as courteously as possible – with supportive evidence – that we are wrong, and the issue will at once be corrected.

Since there seems to be renewed speculation about us as a group, I will repeat what is already in the public domain.

For the record, we are a group of people including researchers, medical scientists and clinicians, some of whom have a professional life-time's experience of ME. Some of us have had ME for many years and some of us are severely affected. We are all close friends of Malcolm Hooper, Professor Emeritus of Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Sunderland, who, although he has carried out no research on ME himself, has made a detailed study of the international literature and of the science that underpins it, and has a deep and committed involvement with and to the UK ME community, having spoken to many local ME groups. Professor Hooper's CV includes the following:

He obtained his B Pharm degree from the Faculty of Medicine, University of London in 1956. He obtained his PhD from the Faculty of Medicine, University of London, in 1959. He was appointed Lecturer in Pharmaceutical and Medicinal Chemistry in 1959 and was appointed Reader in 1969. He was appointed Professor in March 1982.

He taught students of pharmacy, pharmacology and pharmaceutical and chemical analysis at honours degree level. He directed research at Masters and particularly at Doctoral level, supervising PhD students.

He has served as an examiner at many UK universities at graduate and postgraduate level, and has also served as examiner at universities in India and Tanzania.

He has published some 50 papers in peer-reviewed journals in the field of medicinal chemistry and has edited a book on medicinal chemistry.

He has acted as referee for a number of important journals and has served on an editorial Board.

He has served on Committees of the Council for National Academic Awards and also of the World Health Organisation.

He is a member of a number of learned societies, including the Royal Chemical Society and the British Pharmacological Society. For over 12 years he was on the committee of the Society for Medicines Research and served as Chairman for two years; this involved the planning and organising of major national and international conferences.

He has been appointed Chief Scientific Adviser to the Gulf Veterans Association and has submitted evidence to the Select Committee on Defence. He also serves on the Gulf Support Group convened by the Royal British Legion.

Anyone one who wishes to obtain a copy of his full CV should contact him (malcolm.hooper@virgin.net) and a copy will be willingly sent. Please be aware that he may receive over 100 emails per day and cannot possibly attend to them all as soon as he would like.

As for the rest of us, “Eileen Marshall” is the pseudonym of someone who worked in the NHS and who has had severe ME for almost 40 years. She has personal experience of the many distressing symptoms of authentic ME and has a good knowledge and understanding of the relevant literature. She was diagnosed with ME by no less than three separate specialists. She does her best to support and inform as many sufferers as possible. The reason she guards her identity and whereabouts is because some years ago she was very shocked to receive written threats of intended litigation against her if she continued to publicise factual evidence which some people did not wish to be in the public domain.

For professional and personal reasons, others in the group do not wish to reveal their identity or academic status, not least because of charges made by certain psychiatrists that research that has been carried out by sufferers themselves, no matter how well-qualified scientifically or clinically, is biased and has no merit.

For my own part, it is already in the public domain that I undertook post-graduate work at the University of Oxford and that I worked in a senior clinical post in the NHS for many years where I was responsible for a professorial unit of surgery for seven years. Thereafter, for 19 years when able I worked in a voluntary capacity as a medico-legal researcher on ME matters with various law firms.

It was because of my own involvement in High Court litigation concerning ME that I was advised by my barrister that my private name and details must not be allowed into the public domain – and never into the media – as this would be construed by the Defence as attention-seeking and would jeopardise the legal action. That was the sole reason I decided to use a pseudonym. I have nothing whatever to hide, but have no intention of jeopardising the litigation, which is still not finally resolved.

Even knowing the reason for the use of a pseudonym, for their own motives, certain people within the UK ME community seem to take pleasure in deliberately and repeatedly publishing my purported details on the internet. In order to try to prove that I am a liar and thereby to discredit my overall integrity, one person instructed a solicitor in an attempt to bring a legal action against me on the grounds that I am interfering with their human right to freedom of expression by thwarting their wish to make my personal details and the details of my legal action widely known. Obviously I and my solicitors have the correspondence to support what I am saying.

It may be worth re-emphasising that since 1994, all our articles, documents, publications and submissions have had but a single objective, which is to get ME recognised once and for all as a serious, multi-system and complex organic disorder by drawing attention to what is already known about it; sadly, in doing so, it has sometimes been necessary to

address the deliberate suppression of legitimate factual evidence and the pervasive dissemination of misinformation, as well as the cant, self-delusion and deception that have come to surround ME issues. This has sometimes resulted in great animosity towards us, including actual threats and calls for disciplinary action against us.

Whilst everyone is entitled to their own opinion, we do not accept their right to make unjustified threats and personal attacks upon us simply because we challenge their wish to suppress or dismiss legitimate evidence and because we draw attention to the denigration and abuse perpetrated upon those who suffer from ME.

As I have noted before, I hope -- but do not expect -- that this explanation may dispel the groundless accusations and fabrications that have appeared about our alleged motives for using a pseudonym and about the integrity of our group as a whole.