

Statement regarding claims of 'harassment' made by Professor Simon Wessely

There has been a sustained and ongoing media campaign, for some years now, claiming ME/CFS sufferers and supporters are criminally harassing researchers.

There are key problems with these articles/radio programmes:

1. The allegations themselves are unsafe. For example, an anonymous comment that "you will all pay" was deemed a 'death threat' last summer, when no threat was actually made, and the comment appeared to denote instead a prediction of eventual accountability for mistreatment of ME/CFS sufferers. Ironically, David Cameron used the phrase "you will pay" towards rioters a few days later, without it being deemed a 'death threat'.
2. There has also been a false categorisation of legitimate, non-criminal action by ME/CFS sufferers and their supporters (such as requests under FOI legislation, official complaints through various public agencies etc.) as 'malicious harassment', or 'abuse' or 'intimidation'. Legitimate actions are cynically juxtaposed with alleged acts of criminal harassment to construct non-criminal parties as harassers.
3. These articles/programmes then go on to misrepresent any objections to psychogenic dismissal of the illnesses diagnosed as ME or CFS. Reasonable objectors have been falsely deemed 'extremist', even 'criminal', but no chance is given to such objectors to put forward their reasonable positions.

I am a social sciences researcher and lecturer, and the parent of a person diagnosed with ME/CFS. In 2007 I was once falsely accused of 'personally harassing' Professor Wessely by a Wikipedia administrator, claiming Professor Wessely had told him this himself. I publicly oppose and critique psychogenic explanations for ME/CFS, on both a political and academic level. I have NEVER harassed Professor Wessely or contacted him, though he once wrote an unsolicited email to me, after a critical comment I made about flaws in psychogenic explanations was quoted in a parliamentary debate in 2004. When I wrote to Professor Wessely's employers, asking that he clarify he had no part in the false claims made on Wikipedia in 2007, they sadly refused to provide that clarification. Last year in the British Medical Journal, I found that people who wrote to employers were being falsely juxtaposed with alleged 'death threat' makers, as harassers.

I have just written an academic book critiquing psychogenic explanations for physical illnesses. I am therefore an academic critic of Wessely's and others' claims about ME, CFS and other conditions. This is a legitimate practice, and to be falsely accused of harassment is repugnant. People are quite right in asking for substantiation of highly problematic claims, especially as these claims are being used by various parties to wage hate speech against the ME community and innocent advocates.

As I have done many times, I am more than happy to repeat that I condemn any actual harassment of researchers.

The correspondence I had with Professor Wessely's employers is reproduced here:

http://mywikibiz.com/images/7/71/Correspondence_with_Peter_McGuffin_and_John_Williams_over_Professor_Wessely_and_claims_of_harassment.pdf

Angela Kennedy
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