

PRESS RELEASE

EXERCISE THERAPY/PSYCHOTHERAPY NOT ONLY INEFFECTIVE, BUT ALSO POTENTIALLY HARMFUL FOR MANY PATIENTS WITH ME/CFS.

A recent review of the relevant scientific literature shows that the "revalidation therapies" for patients with ME/CFS, which are monopolized by the governmental institutions for example in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands, are not only not efficient, but also aggravate the condition of many patients.

Antwerp (Belgium); Limmen (the Netherlands), October 27th, 2009.

ME/CFS is a debilitating disease, affecting many biological systems. According to the CDC, the level of impairment of ME/CFS patients is often comparable to that of patients with some well-known, very severe medical conditions, such as MS, AIDS, end-stage renal failure, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

There is now sufficient evidence that ME/CFS is a disorder that primarily involves an inflammation with dysregulated and suppressed immune functions, oxidative stress, infections, autoimmunity and mitochondrial dysfunction. During the last few years, many scientific studies, including gene expression research, have confirmed that patients with ME/CFS suffer from the above organic disorders.

Despite several major scientific breakthroughs, ME/CFS is still described in the popular media as a medically unexplained disorder. Psychotherapy (cognitive behavioral therapy) and graded exercise therapy (GET) are declared to be the only possible therapies.

A thorough analysis of the current medical scientific literature and international patient surveys, however, shows that CBT/GET is not only ineffective for the majority of the ME/CFS patients, but also potentially very harmful. Scientific studies and large-scaled patient surveys have shown that treatments with CBT/GET seriously deteriorate the condition of many patients with ME/CFS. The work capacity decreased as well!

The review also explains why GET and exercise do aggravate characteristic complaints, like "fatigue", pain, neurocognitive problems (e.g. concentration and memory). Pre-existing biological aberrations, e.g. inflammation, oxidative stress, and dysfunctional ion channels, will be amplified by a minor exertion, like walking or reading a book ... and by "rehabilitation therapies" like CBT/GET.

The reviewers urge policy makers to change their policies drastically, by putting a stop to potentially harmful and ineffective "rehabilitation"

programs, and investing into medical research and therapies targeted at the immune system, infections and other pathological aspects of this horrible /wasting disease.

References:

Twisk FNM, Maes M. A review on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Graded Exercise Therapy (GET) in Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS): CBT/GET is not only ineffective and not evidence-based, but also potentially harmful for many patients with ME/CFS. *Neuro Endocrinol Lett.* 2009 Aug 26;30(3):284-299.

Maes M, Twisk FNM. Chronic fatigue syndrome: la bête noire of the Belgian health care system. *Neuro Endocrinol Lett.* 2009 Aug 26;30(3):300-311.

Information:

Frank Twisk MBA BEd BEc
Stichting ME-de-patiënten / ME-de-patiënten Foundation
Zonedauw 15
1906 HB Limmen
Nederland / the Netherlands
Tel. +31-(0)72-505 4775
frank.twisk@hetnet.nl
www.michaelmaes.com (here you can download the full text)