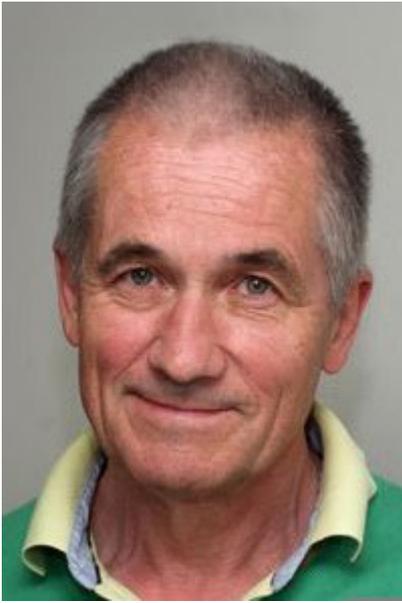


Why We're Establishing an Institute for Scientific Freedom



By
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Scientific freedom, honesty and integrity are constantly under attack, particularly in healthcare, which is dominated by the drug industry and other economic interests. As I have documented in my books and elsewhere, the result of this is that our prescription drugs are the [third leading cause of death](#), after heart disease and cancer, and that [the use of psychiatric drugs does more harm than good](#). Science journalist Robert Whitaker has shown that, in all countries where this relationship has been examined, the amount of people on disability pension because of mental health problems has increased at the same time as the [use of psychiatric drugs has increased](#). Psychiatrist Peter Breggin has shown that likely all psychiatric drugs can cause [long-lasting brain impairment](#), which may explain why the use of these drugs makes it difficult for people to live a normal life.

Problems with the trustworthiness of research are not limited to healthcare. They abound everywhere, and many times people who arrive at unwelcome results are being asked to change their results for political reasons, or to not publish them lest their funding disappear.

The Cochrane Collaboration publishes systematic reviews of the benefits and harms of healthcare interventions. I co-founded this idealistic grassroots organisation 25 years ago. However, upon

reaching a certain size, idealistic organisations often start to operate in a manner diametrically opposed to their original charter. I believe this also happened for Cochrane. I was elected to the Cochrane Governing Board in January 2017 with the most votes of all 11 candidates, although I was the only one who criticised the Cochrane leadership in my election statement. This was a sign of growing dissatisfaction with the leadership among its members.

In retaliation for my attempt at changing Cochrane back to its roots, I was expelled on 13 September 2018 from the Cochrane Collaboration after a [show trial](#) conducted by the Cochrane Governing Board, which [in all likelihood was illegitimate](#).

My expulsion was the result of a power struggle between two factions. One, led by Cochrane's CEO Mark Wilson, opposes open scientific debates on the quality and reliability of Cochrane reviews and emphasises "brand" and "business" rather than getting the science right. The other, led by me, wanted to bring Cochrane back to its core values: free scientific debate; no financial conflicts of interests for authors of Cochrane reviews in relation to the companies whose products they evaluate; and openness, transparency, democracy and cooperation. The affair has been extensively covered in leading journals, including [Science](#), [Nature](#), [BMJ](#) and [Lancet](#). (For more details and a timeline of events, see my website [Deadly Medicines](#).)

Despite great support, I lost the power struggle. If that's why the Danish health service wants to fire me, then Denmark supports Cochrane's new line of "one voice," lack of scientific debates and relationships that are too close to the pharmaceutical industry, which basically will make Cochrane superfluous.

Although Cochrane's own hired law firm exonerated me of all charges the board had raised against me, I was nonetheless expelled, and my employer, the Rigshospitalet, added insult to injury by announcing that I will be fired, [for no reason](#) other than this is what Mark Wilson wants. We know this because my lawyer got access to email correspondence through the Freedom of Information Act.

Unfortunately, the hospital wants to please him. It is outrageous that a person in London interferes in this way with internal affairs in another country and the employment of a person who is salaried by Danish governmental money.

The 31 Centre Directors in Spain and Latin America [demanded an independent investigation](#) of the Cochrane "process" against me, which the board rejected because such an investigation would lead to its demise. I have complained to the Charity Commission in England about serious mismanagement committed by Cochrane's CEO Mark Wilson and the Governing Board who have violated all the key rules for charities and for Cochrane.

More than [9000 signatures](#) have been sent to the Danish Minister of Health with a request to overturn my sacking, with such prominent names as Cochrane co-founder Sir Iain Chalmers, BMJ's editor-in-chief Fiona Godlee, Member of the European Parliament Margrete Auken who has done a lot to make data available to researchers, psychiatrist David Healy, highly respected as one of the world's leading experts on psychiatric drugs, and the world's most cited health researcher, John Ioannidis from Stanford University.

I believe that my impending dismissal is about silencing an important voice in the debate, just like my expulsion from the Cochrane Collaboration was. Cochrane's leadership was very annoyed that I had published a well-founded criticism of the Cochrane review of the HPV vaccines, and I was told that it is bad behavior to criticize colleagues' science when you are a Governing Board member or a Cochrane Director. Obviously, this is scientific censorship.

By reviewing the randomized trials we received from the European Medicines Agency, we have shown that the HPV vaccines may cause serious neurological harms, which the authorities otherwise claim do not exist. We are publishing this, also in a PhD thesis, and we presented the results at our 25th anniversary symposium at Rigshospitalet on October 12th.

Firing me sends the unfortunate signal that if your research results are inconvenient and cause public turmoil, or threaten the pharmaceutical industry's earnings, which we are very concerned about in Denmark, you will be sacked. Strikingly, many of the documents my lawyer has obtained from the Ministry through the Freedom of Information Act are articles where healthcare stakeholders — e.g. psychiatrists, doctors with conflicts of interest, the Health and Medicines Agencies, and editors of journals financed by the pharmaceutical industry — try to depict me as untrustworthy in order to promote their own interests.

I still hope reason will prevail and that I shall not get sacked, but I doubt it. Administrators prefer to save face rather than admit they were wrong.

It is on this background that Peter Breggin suggested to me in November that we should establish an Institute for Scientific Freedom under my leadership in Copenhagen. We will open this new institute on 9 March 2019 in connection with an international scientific meeting. The meeting announcement can be found [here](#). There will be excellent speakers from the USA, Europe and Australia, including Breggin and Whitaker. We have not decided yet how to organise ourselves, as this will depend on whether I get sacked or not, but we have great expectations.

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Deadly Psychiatry and Organised Denial: Professor Peter C. Gøtzsche, MD, co-founded the Cochrane Collaboration. He has published more than 70 papers in the top five general medical journals, and five books, most recently, [Deadly Psychiatry and Organised Denial](#). He is currently [crowdfunding](#) to launch the new Institute for Scientific Freedom with the goal of preserving honesty and integrity in science.