

## 15 October. Gøtzsche's comments on Governing Board letter to German EBM network

[In their reply from 12 October](#), the co-chairs of the Cochrane Governing Board, Marguerite Koster and Martin Burton, repeat many falsehoods they have propagated previously.

*"Your letter contains a number of inaccuracies. It also draws conclusions on the basis of limited, biased evidence. Given your network's position in promoting the teaching and practice of evidence-based medicine we hope that, moving forward, you will consider the entire body of evidence pertaining to this matter."*

**My comment:** There are no inaccuracies in the network's letter, which rightly highlights the significant lack of transparency in the process. It also points out the ambiguity of my alleged "bad behaviour" and the difficulty in understanding the Board's "reason to expel one of the most respected scientists and Cochrane founders, Peter C. Gøtzsche". This esteemed group of scientists is deeply concerned about the democratic basis for this decision, it strongly recommends a 'rethink' of the decision and asks the Board to transparently unveil all arguments which have guided the Board's decision.

It is the Board that has deliberately disseminated incomplete and biased information. I have tried to correct the misinformation by publishing the documents on my website, and the German EBM network therefore had access to unbiased information.

*"As mentioned in the Board's statements and other correspondence, Professor Gøtzsche maintained a consistent pattern of disruptive and inappropriate behaviours, over a number of years, which undermined Cochrane's collaborative culture and were detrimental to the charity's work, reputation and members."*

**My comment:** This is mendacious. I have **not** demonstrated unacceptable behaviours over a number of years. As a scientist who has spent a career exposing the undue influence and corruption of the pharmaceutical industry, it is not surprising that Cochrane has received complaints from industry-friendly representatives [about my critiques of science](#). Cochrane should have defended me against those undue attacks but instead, caved in to the pressure. My contribution to Cochrane has been to boost its reputation, whereas the contributions of the Board and CEO Mark Wilson [have been harmful](#) to the charity's work, reputation and members.

*"He consistently placed his own interests above those of Cochrane."*

**My comment:** This is utterly false, and as the Board knows it is false, the Board offers this statement to the world in bad faith. I explained in my report to [Cochrane's law firm](#) (page 60) why it is false:

*It is a false dichotomy to ask the Counsel whether I have pursued my own interests and scientific career over the interests of the Cochrane Collaboration. These two objectives are inseparable, and I have benefited both during my 25 years with Cochrane. When I started doing research, my ambition was to do high-quality research that was useful for patients. My thesis from 1990 about nonsteroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs received a lot of attention and was the reason I was invited by Sir Iain Chalmers to be a co-founder of the Cochrane Collaboration in 1993. I established the Nordic Cochrane Centre at the same time.*

*I am the only Dane who has published more than 70 papers in “the big five” (BMJ, Lancet, JAMA, Annals of Internal Medicine and New England Journal of medicine). The fact that I am a respected researcher that publishes research that is useful for patients played a major role for my repeated attempts at getting Danish Cochrane activities on the government’s budget. I succeeded to achieve this, and the Nordic Cochrane Centre and the three Cochrane review groups based in Denmark still have permanent funding. This funding has enabled me to provide more than £3 million for Cochrane software development.”*

*“Many of his behaviours were beyond explanation by academic or cultural differences.”*

**My comment:** It seems to me that Cochrane has introduced a kind of thought and behaviour police, as we know it from certain dictatorship states. George Orwell’s *1984* comes to mind here. Whatever one might think of my behaviour, the behaviour displayed by Cochrane’s CEO and the two co-chairs of the Board is much, much worse.

*“Furthermore, multiple warnings were given and conversations took place over many years in concerted attempts to deal constructively with the issues.”*

**My comment:** This is mendacious. I have never received any “warnings” about my “behaviour” or any explanation about what is objectionable. The only complaints with any substance about me have been in response to my scientific critiques, often by those whose science I have disagreed with. Simply publicly disagreeing with someone’s science is hardly a basis for a complaint about my “behaviour.” Wilson has given me multiple warning about my alleged breaches of his Spokesperson Policy, but as Cochrane’s own legal report confirms, I never breached this Policy thereby making his allegations void.

*“With regard to your concern over transparency, please note that when we have been able to do so, we have shared specific examples of the behaviours mentioned above. The Board has, however, been constrained in what it has been able to say by the rules of privacy and confidentiality that Professor Gøtzsche and his supporters have - from 13th September onwards - disregarded. When we have been able to speak out, we have done so and will continue to do so.”*

**My comment:** This is false. Cochrane did everything it could to keep the entire investigation “confidential” and control the public message by issuing false and misleading statements. There was no transparency at all before I released Counsel’s report and other essential documents on my website. Co-chair Martin Burton’s [‘hate speech’](#) at the Annual General Meeting did not offer any clear explanation why I was expelled, and when asked, there was no reply. This is the opposite of transparency. Further, the two statements from the Board, from [17 September](#) and [26 September](#), were mendacious.

The Board conveniently fails to note that I uploaded the documents that demonstrate serious mismanagement on the part of the CEO and the co-chairs of the Board **after** the Board had seriously defamed me with its mendacious allegations on 17 September at the Annual General Meeting.

*“If we interpret your letter correctly, it appears that you condone the behaviour of Professor Peter Gøtzsche. We respectfully suggest that the behaviours he demonstrated both before 13th September 2018, when our Board first considered them, and especially subsequently (he has continued to disseminate shockingly defamatory materials) are not behaviours that would be found acceptable to the Universitetsklinikum*

*Hamburg-Eppendorf, Universität Witten, Universität Hamburg, Martin Luther University, or other esteemed institutions. We should like to understand why then would they be acceptable to the EBM Netzwerk?"*

**My comment:** My so-called behaviours have always been accepted at the University of Copenhagen and at Rigshospitalet where my centre is located. In contrast to Cochrane, these institutions appreciate appropriate scientific criticism. We do not have scientific censorship in Denmark, in [contrast to Cochrane](#).

*"Cochrane is a UK charity that operates under British law. Our Board has acted at all times, with honesty and integrity, in accordance with the law and with the advice of our lawyers."*

**My comment:** It is tragic that the Board is out of touch, not only with its members, but with reality. Even in the face of international criticism about how it has handled this latest scandal, the Board continues to congratulate itself with blind enthusiasm. I was exposed to a show trial, which I and others have documented at length on [www.deadlymedicines.dk](http://www.deadlymedicines.dk). David Hammerstein, a Board member who resigned in protest over my expulsion, has [written about the process](#):

*The crucifixion of Peter Gøtzsche. The whole process against Gøtzsche has been anti-democratic and none of the basic tenets of due process, fairness and transparency have been upheld. There has been no attempt at seeking outside neutral arbitration nor the use of techniques of conflict resolution with the aim of reaching a friendly agreement or even a more peaceful modus vivendi concerning disagreements. No time has been given to establish an independent committee of conflict made up of people from outside of Cochrane's the main institutions. Every step of democratic guarantees that is common in most large organizations has been ignored in this case with the objective of the rapid exclusion and tarnishing of Peter Gøtzsche. Any future independent investigation of this question should be centered on the violation of democratic processes by the CEO and the Co-chairs of the Governing Board.*

*"At no stage in the process did 'a minority of board members' expel him."*

**My comment:** This is false. On 13 September, the Board voted on whether to expel me. Six voted in favour, which is a minority of the Board's 13 members.

*"As we have publicly stated, 11 out of 12 Board members voted that he had breached the Board's Code of Conduct for Trustees."*

**My comment:** This demonstrates how the Board is deliberately misleading its members. According to information I have, this statement is totally false. The Board knew that I had not breached the code of conduct and the Board could therefore not expel me from my democratically elected position as trustee. Co-chair Martin Burton therefore tried to convince the Board that they should ask me to resign voluntarily. This was what the Board voted about.

The Board also realised at some point that the only way they could kick me out of the Board was to expel me as a member of Cochrane. In that case, I could not remain on the Board. What really happened was that only 6 people voted to expel me – out of a total of 13 Board members.

The Board writes that I breached my duties as a Trustee and started the dissemination of private, confidential and defamatory materials after I was expelled. As noted above, I uploaded the documents that demonstrate serious mismanagement on the part of the CEO and the co-chairs of the Board **after** the Board had seriously defamed me with its mendacious allegations on 17 September at the Annual General Meeting. We call this transparency.

*“We are disappointed if your organization, and those who fund you, believe that high esteem is more important than respectful, collaborative behaviour that clearly serves the best interests of Cochrane, as well as other organizations that hold employees, volunteers and others to high standards of conduct.”*

**My comment:** This comment is interesting, as there has been absolutely **no** “respectful, collaborative behaviour that clearly serves the best interests of Cochrane” on the part of Cochrane’s CEO, the two Board co-chairs and the remaining four members of the Board.