

Professor Sir David Hull

Professor A Zuckerman
Dean
Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine
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6 July, 1998

Dear *Professor Zuckerman*

Re Investigation of children with pervasive developmental disorder for bowel disorder.

I would welcome your help on a matter of personal concern. In February 1998, Mr Wakefield and his colleagues reported the findings of their search for the cause of bowel disorder in children with autism. At the MRC meeting on MMR they said that many more children had been similarly investigated and still more were on the waiting list. The studies include: admission to hospital, sedation, lumbar puncture, biopsies of the bowel, MRI imaging and radiography.

In the light of the initial findings and the evidence that as a group the children do not suffer long term bowel disorder, it would seem difficult to justify such invasive studies on clinical grounds. It may be that there are arguments to perform further investigation to elucidate the nature of the brain disorder and the bowel findings. As I cannot see what those might be, the thought of autistic children being subject to such investigations continues to trouble me, and thus my request to you.

I see that the investigations were approved by the Ethical Practices Committee of the Royal Free Hospital NHS Trust. If the studies are continuing I would be grateful if I could see the Ethics Committee position on the investigations, especially if they have reviewed their position in the light of the reported findings. If you thought it helpful the Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health could give an independent view.

Yours sincerely

David Hull

