

DISREGARDING DIAGNOSIS KILLS

a feature article by

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As a concept, it's extraordinary. As a political policy, it's a killer.

In the United Kingdom (UK) there are three words that identify the greatest ongoing human suffering since World War II, and they are: Work Capability Assessment.

Until 2008, Incapacity Benefit was the income replacement benefit awarded to chronically sick and disabled people by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as the 'safety net', used to resist destitution for anyone who, through illness or disability, were not able to work. That all changed in 2008 when the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) replaced Incapacity Benefit and, to access the new benefit, claimants were required to undergo the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), which totally disregards diagnosis.

Justification for the introduction of the WCA in October 2008, by the Brown government, was the insistence that 'academic research' had demonstrated that many people claiming Incapacity Benefit were capable of work and many had '*psychosomatic*' illnesses. The 'academic research' used to justify that claim was *The Scientific and Conceptual Basis of Incapacity Benefit*, produced in 2005 by former orthopaedic surgeon Gordon Waddell and the former DWP Chief Medical Officer, (Sir) Mansel Aylward. The research was commissioned by the DWP, was sponsored by the American corporate healthcare insurance giant UnumProvident Insurance, and was undertaken at the UnumProvident Centre for Psychosocial and Disability Research at Cardiff University.

It was this 'academic research' that introduced the biopsychosocial (BPS) model of assessment to the unsuspecting sick and disabled community in the UK. A replica of the 'non-medical' assessment model used by UnumProvident Insurance to resist funding healthcare insurance claims, this same BPS model would be adopted by the DWP and used for the WCA.

It didn't take this former healthcare professional too long to expose the BPS model of assessment promoted by Waddell and Aylward as being critically flawed, and guaranteed to cause preventable harm. Described as a 'functional assessment', the WCA was used to demonstrate a claimant's physical capabilities, with the emphasis placed on rehabilitation and a presumption that one million people claiming Incapacity Benefit were fit to work.

Staff conducting the WCA do not have access to the claimant's medical history, fail to consider diagnosis or prognosis, as claimants with serious health problems were refused benefit and told to get a job. Doctors working for corporate giants on behalf of the government have '*total immunity from all medical regulation*' according to the General Medical Council, and the WCA started taking its toll as chronically sick and disabled people in the UK began dying in their thousands.

The situation was destined to deteriorate following the election of the Conservative led Coalition government in 2010, when David Cameron became the new Prime Minister. Since 2010 the British government have justified a concerted political attack against the financial and, often, the physical survival of chronically sick and profoundly disabled people by using 'policy based research' commissioned by the DWP, which was guaranteed to conclude whatever was needed by the DWP. This included the 2007 report by former banker David Freud, whose report *Reducing Dependency, Increasing Opportunity* identified many ways to reduce the DWP's welfare budget by the reduction of meagre benefits provided for the poorest people in the land. Freud continues to influence government welfare policies in his capacity as the unelected and appointed Minister for Welfare Reform, first in the Coalition government and in the new Conservative government, elected in May 2015. The excessive use of benefit sanctions, as recommended by Freud, sees chronically ill people in receipt of the ESA having their entire income removed, for failing to be well enough to attend a work interview at the local Jobcentre. So, they are forced to access the nearest foodbank as Rickets, a disease from the Victorian age, is now witnessed again in C21st UK and diabetics who have been sanctioned, and are unable to eat due to destitution, arrive in casualty departments in a coma.

New detailed research by acclaimed academics at UK universities, not commissioned by a government department or sponsored by a healthcare insurance giant with an alternative agenda, recently demonstrated that the BPS model purported by Waddell and Aylward was bogus. *Blaming the victim all over again: Waddell and Aylward's biopsychosocial (BPS)*

model of disability by Tom Shakespeare and colleagues confirmed the conclusions of the last seven years of evidence by this researcher, and exposed Waddell and Aylward's BPS model as having '*no coherent theory or evidence behind this model*', and demonstrating '*a cavalier approach to scientific evidence*'. That's academic speak for 'this assessment model is totally bogus'.

More detailed academic research by Ben Barr and colleagues exposed in December 2015 that the WCA was responsible for '*significant increases in suicides, self-reported mental health problems and antidepressant prescribing*', which the recently elected Conservative government chose to totally disregard. They also totally disregarded a hard-hitting 2014 report by the Work and Pensions Select Committee that recommended that the WCA should be aborted, and replaced with a more user-friendly assessment, as it created unnecessary stress and distress for claimants.

Detailed evidence by this researcher, which the government attempted and failed to suppress, is now available in the new book: *CASH NOT CARE ~ the planned demolition of the UK welfare state*. Coincidentally, the release of this book, on 14th September, follows the new Prime Minister's suggestion that 'social insurance' could be introduced to the UK, en route to the demolition of the welfare state, as all planned a very long time ago.

In my first research report published in 2010, evidence was exposed to suggest that the UK welfare reforms had been planned for a long time, and were being implemented en route to the eventual adoption of American social security policies. Recent research evidence identified in the forthcoming book confirms past suspicions.

CASH NOT CARE: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state is now available as an A4 paperback and hardback, and also as an eBook/Kindle via Amazon and various book stores.

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