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Dr. Whittemore

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Head Jos W.M. van der Meer, MD, FRCP
Professor of Internal Medicine

Date April 22, 2010

Our reference

Concerning

Dear dr. Whittemore,

Apparently you wrote a letter to dr. McClure in which you make serious allegations about us (letter of 12 April published on your website www.wpinstitute.org). We would have appreciated if you would have been so professional as to inform us first hand. Furthermore, we feel some aggression in your letter that is unscientific.

To rebut the points you make:

1. At the cytokine meeting in Lisbon, dr. Judy Mikovits has told the audience that the Lake Tahoe cohort was investigated. One of us, prof. Mihai Netea, has asked critical questions about this at the discussion session, and the use of this cohort was defended as being representative for CFS by dr. Mikovits. In addition, dr. Mikovits admitted not using any sporadic cases of CFS in her studies. At the end of this public discussion at the session, she also admitted that “epidemic” and “sporadic” cases of CFS may represent different diseases.
2. At the moment you reported your findings on the Nijmegen samples, our paper was under consideration of the BMJ (after being rejected after a 5-week review process by the Lancet). Since our findings were based on solid, sensitive PCRs (described in detail in our paper) that efficiently detected XMRV in a cell line, as well as in positive samples that were provided to us by Dr. Judy Mikovits, we suspected contamination of our samples in your laboratory, the more so as XMRV was detected at a similar frequency in CFS patients (2 out of 7) and healthy controls (1 out of 3). Of note, the samples that you found positive were repeatedly negative upon retesting in our lab. Given the robustness of our paper, we considered it scientifically premature to report this finding before having settled the reason for the discrepancy. To solve the discrepancy, we proposed to exchange cohorts on February 9. Unfortunately, to date we have not received any response.

Again, we regret that you write letters like these, in which you do not hesitate to question our integrity, and distribute these via your website without giving us a fair chance for rebuttal.

Yours sincerely,
Frank van Kuppeveld, PhD.

On behalf of Arjan de Jong, Kjerstin Lanke, Gerald Verhaegh, Willem Melchers, Caroline Swanink, Gijls Bleijenberg, Mihai G. Netea, Jochem M.D. Galama, Jos W.M. van der Meer.