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Dept of Psychiatry,
Bangor, Wales.
November 7th

Ellen Trane Nørby
Minister of Health
Denmark

Re Peter Gøtzsche – Nordic Cochrane Centre - Rigshospitalet

Dear Minister:

Yesterday you received a letter from 3500 medical researchers expressing their concern at a possible dismissal of Peter Gøtzsche from the Rigshospitalet. The letter referred to Dr Gøtzsche's considerable scientific achievements as well as his leadership of global efforts to bring transparency to clinical study data – something that is critical for patients and doctors and for pharmaceutical price control.

As someone who was in the same position as Dr Gøtzsche, I am one of the few signatories who can speak to another set of issues – the consequences of any dismissal or even the suspension that has happened. In 2000, I was dismissed by the University of Toronto having given a lecture about clinical trial data transparency linked to the hazards of suicidality on the antidepressant group of drugs.

The result was an international event that did more to make a wider constituency aware of the hazards that had concerned me and others for a decade than anything else ever did. Two years later, these drugs had been banned in minors and carried Black Box Warnings.

The furore put the issue of transparency of clinical trial data firmly on the map and has recruited others to the cause, as will any move against Peter Gøtzsche.

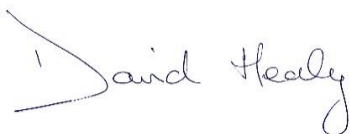
The pressure to dismiss me didn't come from the pharmaceutical industry as most outsiders thought. Company marketing departments rarely want to make a martyr of someone. The problem comes from people in the middle, Deputy Chief Executives like Per Joergensen, who miss the bigger picture and can't imagine that clamping down on any hints of concerns might make the problem bigger rather than cause it to go away.

The reputation of the institution that dismissed me ended up, as a result, more sullied than mine.

I (and I expect others) have already provided Dr Gøtzsche with evidence to support a legal action he intends to take against Cochrane. His current suspension will further strengthen his case and will likely bring the chain of decision making behind his suspension into play.

I attach with this letter an article of mine covering some of the linked issues. I have had several requests from other journals for more detailed accounts of the issues, focusing more specifically on Dr Gøtzsche and his position in Cochrane and Copenhagen.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Healy". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Professor David Healy MD FRCPsych