



ME FORENINGEN

Rådhusstorvet 1,1

3520 Farum

+45 4495 9700

mail@me-foreningen.dk

www.me-foreningen.dk

Open Letter to Minister of Health, Magnus Heunicke

To: Danish Minister of Health, Magnus Heunicke

On March 14th 2019, a unified Danish Parliament voted to acknowledge WHO's diagnostic classification of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME - G93.3) as a biological illness and to separate ME from Functional Disorders.

The proposal passed is aligned with the current international scientific knowledge about ME.

Based on analysis of more than 9.000 peer-reviewed studies, the Institute of Medicine¹, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), as well as the advisory report from the Dutch Health Council², conclude that ME is a serious chronic multisystem, biological disease that substantially limits the activities and quality of life of patients.

ME is a complex and physical disease for which there is currently no cure. It is not a psychological or psychosomatic disease. There is strong scientific evidence of neurological/autonomic dysfunction, immunologic and inflammatory pathologies, microbiome perturbation, metabolic/mitochondrial as well as cardiac abnormalities (and more) in patients.

Based on this scientific evidence, there is an imminent need to change the narrative of ME to avoid that patients are misdiagnosed or further stigmatized by falsely equating the disease with (chronic or unexplained) fatigue, deconditioning or psychosomatic classifications, like functional disorders, medically unexplained symptoms, somatoform disorders, somatic symptom disorder, functional somatic syndrome, neurasthenia, or bodily distress disorder/syndrome.

Patients have for decades been prescribed treatments like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Graded Exercise Therapy (GET), based on the idea that they suffer from "false illness beliefs", fear of exercise or that they are deconditioned. This 'deconditioning hypothesis' as well as the 'psychosomatic hypothesis' of ME is not supported by biomedical research.

The treatments based on these hypotheses (CBT/GET) have produced no robust evidence in the past two decades, as the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality systematic literature review, and reanalysis of the largest ever study on CBT/GET (PACE trial)³ have shown.

¹ IOM 2015 report

² <https://www.gezondheidsraad.nl/en/task-and-procedure/areas-of-activity/optimale-gezondheidszorg/mecfs>

³ <https://bmcpyschology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-018-0218-3>

The CDC has recently removed its recommendations for CBT and GET from its website.

Furthermore, and of dire importance, patients internationally for more than 20 years have continually reported deterioration from following the advice of their doctors to gradually increase their exertion levels based on a GET protocol.

Post-exertional malaise (PEM), a worsening of symptoms after minimal physical or mental exertion, is the hallmark characteristic of the disease. GET worsens PEM and has the potential to cause lasting harm for patients with ME.

There is international consensus that funding biomedical ME research is the only way to create better insights into the physiological mechanisms of this debilitating disease, so we can provide better and more efficient care based on the needs of patients and the biomedical nature of the disease, as well as effective treatments and potentially a cure. Biomarkers are also needed for accurate diagnosis.

More funding for biomedical research into ME is therefore urgently needed.

We ask that the Danish Government will strongly consider a long-term investment in biomedical ME research. It is an absolute priority and the only way to make the necessary progress to help stop what the CDC calls a “hidden health crisis.”

We would be happy to provide you with further insights based on our expertise, if needed.

This letter has also been sent to the Director of the Danish Health Authority, as well as the Minister of Higher Education and Science.

Sincerely,

DENMARK

Jesper Mehlsen

Speciallæge
Klinik Mehlsen,
Peter Bangs Vej 7A, 2000 Frederiksberg
Seniorforsker
Enhed for Kirurgisk Patofysiologi
Juliane Marie Center
Rigshospitalet

Kim Varming

Ledende overlæge
Klinisk Immunologisk Afdeling
Aalborg Universitetshospital

Rikke Katrine Jentoft Olsen, MSc, PhD

Associated Professor
Research Unit for Molecular Medicine
Department for Clinical Medicine
Aarhus University

Henrik Nielsen, MD, DMSC

Specialist i intern medicin og rheumatology

Medlem af Radikale Venstres bestyrelse i Gentofte og Region Hovedstaden

MC Members of CA15111 - Member of European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (EUROMENE)

Ana C. Gonzalez Ebsen ^[1]_[SEP] PhD Student

Molekylær Medicinsk Forskningsenhed (MMF)

Aarhus University, Denmark

Ole Næsh Hendriksen

Speciallæge, dr.med.

Klinik Mehlsen

Peter Bangs Vej 7A

2000 Frederiksberg

Paula Fernandez Guerra, PhD, MSc

Biomedical researcher

Research Unit for Molecular Medicine

Aarhus University Hospital

Denmark

SWEDEN**Jonas Bergquist**

Professor Uppsala University

MC Members of CA15111 - European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (EUROMENE)

Sverige

Sture Eriksson

Associated Professor

Vice chairmen

Swedish RME Association

Bo C. Bertilson ^[1]_[SEP] MD, PhD

Research leader Bragee clinics and Musculoskeletal functions and pain ^[1]_[SEP]

Div. Family Medicine and Primary Care, NVS ^[1]_[SEP] Karolinska Institutet

Academic Primary Health care Center

Anders Rehnström

Specialistläkare

ME-Mottagningen

Stora Sköndal

Stockholm

Åsa Andersson

VD / Direktör

Stora Sköndal, Sverige

Sven Britton

Tidl. professor i infektionssjukdomar
Karolinska Institutet
Sverige

Muhammad Rizwan

MS Infection Biology
Associate Researcher
Clinical Microbiology Uppsala University Hospital, Sweden

Dr Per Julin, MD, PhD

Institution for Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society (NVS)
Karolinska Institutet

<https://medarbetare.ki.se/people/perjul>

Senior Consultant

ME/CFS-poliklinik, Neurological Rehabilitation Clinic

Stora Sköndal

https://www.storaskondal.se/vara-verksamheter/neurologisk_rehabilitering/mecfs-mottagning/

Expert in SBU (Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services) review of ME/CFS:

<https://www.sbu.se/en/publications/sbu-bereder/myalgic-encephalomyelitis-and-chronic-fatigue-syndrome-mecfs/>

Petter Brodin

Senior Researcher & physician
Department of pediatrics
Karolinska University Hospital

Eirini Apostolou, Ph.D

Dept. of Clin. & Exp. Med.
Division of Cell Biology
Linköping University
58185 Linköping
Sweden

Kumari Ubhayasekera (PhD)

Department of Chemistry-BMC
Uppsala University
Uppsala, Sweden

Carl-Gerhard Gottfries

Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry
Gottfries Clinic Krokslätts Torg 5,
43137 Mölndal

Wimal Ubhayasekera

Uppsala University
Uppsala, Sweden

Björn Bragée, MD

Specialist in Pain Medicine,
Founder of ME-Center, Stockholm

Anders Rosén, Professor emeritus

Linköping University
Sweden

NORWAY**Olav Mella Department director, professor**

Department of Oncology and Medical Physics ^[1]_{SEP}
Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway
www.helse-bergen.no

Per Ole Iversen, Professor

Department of Nutrition
University of Oslo,
P.O. Box 1046 Blindern, 0317 Oslo

Ola Saugstad

Professor emeritus MD, PhD, FRCPE
Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Oslo.
Director of Department of Pediatric Research
Consultant in Neonatology
Rikshospitalet, University of Oslo,
Norway

Kristian Sommerfelt

Pediatrician
MD, PhD. Professor
Haukeland University Hospital
University of Bergen
Bergen, Norway.

Tor Lea

Professor emeritus, PhD
Dept. of Chemistry, Biotechnology and Food Science
Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Ås, Norway

FINLAND

Olli Polo, MD, PhD
Specialist in Pulmonary Medicine
Expert in Sleep Medicine
Tampere University Hospital, Tampere, Finland

Markku Partinen, MD, PhD, FAAN
Professor, Specialist in Neurology, Research Director
Somnologist, ESRS, Expert in Sleep Medicine
Helsinki Sleep Clinic, Vitalmed Research Centre
Helsinki, Finland

POLAND

Dr Pawel Zalewski
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz
M. Sklodowskiej-Curie 9, Poland, Bydgoszcz
EUROMENE MC Member

GERMANY

Carmen Scheibenbogen
Professor Dr. Med, Leiterin Immundefekt-Ambulanz
FÄ für Hämatologie, Onkologie und Fachimmunologin. Charite,
Berlin

Uta Behrends Prof. Dr. med.
Pediatric haematooncologist
CFS policlinic
Children's Hospital
Technische Universität München
Munich

BELGIUM

Dr AM Uyttersprot
Neurologist CFS
Maria Theresialaan 33/6
1800 Vilvoorde, Belgium

NETHERLANDS

Prof Dr Frans C Visser, cardiologist
ME/CFS specialist
Stichting CardioZorg
Planetenweg 5, 2132HN Hoofddorp, Holland

Dr C (Linda) MC van Campen, cardiologist
ME/CFS specialist
Stichting CardioZorg
Planetenweg 5
2132HN Hoofddorp, Holland

UNITED KINGDOM

Dr Luis Nacul
Clinical Associate Professor,
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine,
London UK

Dr Charles Shepherd MB BS
Hon Medical Adviser
ME Association
7 Apollo Office Court
Radcliffe Road, Buckingham

Dr Nigel Speight
Paediatrician
Durham, UK

William Weir
Consultant Physician
London

Malcolm Hooper
Emeritus Professor of Medicinal Chemistry,
PhD B Pharm, MRIC, C Chem.
University of Sunderland, UK

Derek Pheby
Visiting Professor of Epidemiology,
Buckinghamshire New University,
High Wycombe, England,
MC Member of CA15111 - European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
(EUROMENE).

Dr. K.N. Hng
MBChB, MRCP, PG Cert in WBME, FHEA
Author of "M.E. and Me: A Doctor's Struggle with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome"

Professor Chris P Ponting
University of Edinburgh
MRC Human Genetics Unit

Dr Sarah Myhill,

Upper Weston,
Llangunllo, Knighton,
Powys LD7 1SL

Author of the book "Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Myalgic Encephalitis"

Prof Simon Carding

Head, Gut Microbes and Health Research Programme
Quadram Institute Bioscience,
Norwich Research Park, NR4 7UA

Nina Muirhead BA(oxon) BMBCh(oxon)

MRCS DOHNS MED PGDipDerm
Specialty Doctor in Dermatologic Surgery
Chair of CFS/ME Research Collaborative (CMRC) Education Working Group
Buckinghamshire

Tom Wileman

Professor Molecular Virology
Quadram Institute Bioscience
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich, NR4 7UQ

Dr Cara Tomas

Research associate,
Newcastle University,
Newcastle upon-Tyne, UK

Dr Penny Powell

Senior Lecturer in Cell and Molecular Virology
Norwich Medical School, University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK

Dr Amolak S Bansal

Consultant in Clinical Immunology, allergy and CFS/ME
St Anthony's Hospital
Cheap, SM3 9DW,
England

Dr Ben Marsh

Consultant Neurodisability Paediatrician
Clinical Director Community Paediatrics
University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust
England

AUSTRIA**Francisco Westermeier**

Institute of Biomedical Science
University of Applied Sciences, FH JOANNEUM
Graz, Austria
(CA15111) European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (EUROMENE)
Management Committee: Austria

ITALY**Professor Umberto Tirelli**

Senior visiting scientist National Cancer Institute
Aviano Italy

Dr. Paolo Cornelio Brambilla

General Practitioner, Psychotherapist.
Italian delegate at European M.E. Alliance
Member of the Scientific Committee of CFS-ME ODV, Italy.

SPAIN**Dr Jose Alegre, MD; PhD**

Vall d'Hebron University Hospital
ME/CFS Clinical Unit
Barcelona, Spain
Email: jalegre@vhebron.net

Dr Jesús Castro, PhD

Vall d'Hebron University Hospital
Mediterranea Research Bldg (VHIR)
ME/CFS Research Unit
Barcelona, Spain
E-mail: jesus.castro@vhir.org
ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2481-3052>

LATVIA

Uldis Berkis, asoc. prof.
Riga Stradins University
Letland

Modra Murovska, MD, PhD;
Riga Stradiņš University,

Riga, Latvia;
CA15111 Action Chair European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
(EUROMENE)
Letland

Zaiga Nora-Krukle, Ph.D

Senior researcher at Institute of Virology and microbiology,
Riga Stradins University
COST action CA15111, MC substitute
EATRIS coordinator of Latvia node

BULGARIEN

Assoc.Prof. Evelina Shikova

Head NRL "Herpes and Oncogenic Viruses"
National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases
Sofia,
Bulgaria

ROMANIA

Carmen-Adella Sirbu

Associate Professor of Neurology,
Titu Maiorescu University
Central Military Emergency University Hospital, Bucharest, Romania.
MC Members of CA15111 - European Network on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
(EUROMENE).

SERBIA

Sekulic Slobodan

Full research professor
MC member of CA15111
Medical Faculty Novi Sad, Serbia

USA

Ronald G. Tompkins, M.D., Sc.D.

Sumner M Redstone Professor of Surgery
Harvard Medical School
Massachusetts General Hospital
USA

Linda Tannenbaum

Founder and CEO
Open Medicine Foundation
USA

Robert D Phair PhD
Chief Science Officer
Integrative Bioinformatics Inc
Mountain View, CA
USA

Ronald W. Davis, PhD
Stanford University
Director, Stanford Genome Technology Center
Director, ME/CFS Collaborative Research Center at Stanford
Director, Open Medicine Foundation Scientific Advisory Board
USA

Wenzhong Xiao
Assistant professor of Bioinformatics
Director of the Inflammation & Metabolism Computational Center
Harvard Medical School & Massachusetts General Hospital
USA

Mady Hornig, MA, MD⁴
Associate Professor of Epidemiology
Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
USA

Leonard A. Jason, Ph.D. ^[1]
Professor of Psychology | DePaul University
Director, Center for Community Research
990 W. Fullerton Ave., Suite 3119
Chicago, IL 60614
Telephone: 773-325-2018
Website: <http://leonardjason.com/>
USA

Michael VanElzakker, PhD
Research Fellow, Neuroscience & Neurotherapeutics
Harvard Medical School & Massachusetts General Hospital
Instructor, Tufts University
USA

Betsy Keller, PhD
Professor, Exercise Science
Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY
Co-Coordinator, Clinical Core
NIH-funded Collaborative Research Center for the Study of ME/CFS
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY,
USA

⁴ **Indeed, there is evidence that such approaches (CBT/GET) may not only be ineffective, but may actually be harmful to patients. (Davenport TE et al. [Checking our blind spots: current status of research evidence summaries in ME/CFS. Br J Sports Med](#) 2019;53:1198. doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2018-099553)**

H. Craig Heller, Professor
Biology Department
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305-5020
USA

Jennifer Frankovich, MD MS
Clinical Associate Professor
Pediatric Rheumatology
Stanford University
Co-Director, Stanford PANS Clinic
Director, Stanford PANS research program
USA

Mario R. Capecchi
Distinguished Professor
University of Utah School of Medicine
USA

Todd E. Davenport, PT, DPT, MPH, OCS
Professor & Program Director
University of the Pacific
Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences
Department of Physical Therapy
USA

Robert K. Naviaux, MD, PhD
Professor of Genetics
Biochemical Genetics and Metabolism
Departments of Medicine, Pediatrics, and Pathology
Co-director, The Mitochondrial and Metabolic Disease Center (MMDC)
UCSD School of Medicine
214 Dickinson St., Room C-107
San Diego, CA 92103-8467
USA

Amel Karaa, MD
Assistant Professor,
Harvard Medical School
Director, Mitochondrial Disease Program,
Massachusetts General Hospital

Lars Steinmetz, Ph.D.
Professor of Genetics, Stanford University^[SEP]
Co-Director, Stanford Genome Technology Center^[SEP]
Principal Investigator & Senior Scientist, Genome Biology Unit, EMBL
USA

J. Mark VanNess, Ph.D.
Professor - Health and Exercise Science
University of the Pacific
Stockton, CA 95211
Scientific Advisor - WorkWell Foundation, Ripon, CA
USA

Derya Unutmaz, M.D.
Professor, Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine
Professor, University of Connecticut School of Medicine
Farmington, CT, 06032,
USA

Staci R. Stevens, MA
Founder, Exercise Physiologist
Workwell Foundation is a fiscally sponsored program of United Charitable
P.O. Box 1435
Ripon, CA 95366
USA

Dr. Alan R. Light, Ph.D.
Professor
Depts. of Anesthesiology and Neurobiology and Anatomy
3C 444 SOM
University of Utah
30N 1900 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84132

Lucinda Bateman, MD
Chief Medical Director
24 South 1100 East, Suite 205
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102
P 801.359.7400 | F 801.359.7404
lbateman@batemanhornecenter.org

Maureen R. Hanson
Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor
Director, Cornell University Center for Energizing Neuroimmune Disease
Ithaca, NY, USA

Joyce Ferrone,
FNP-BC Nurse Practitioner
24 South 1100 East, Suite 205
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102, USA

Benjamin H. Natelson, MD
Director, Pain & Fatigue Study Center
Professor of Neurology
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
New York, NY 10029, USA

Peter C. Rowe, MD

Professor of Pediatrics
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Baltimore, MD 21287
USA

CANADA**Alain Moreau PhD**

Director / Directeur
Interdisciplinary Canadian Collaborative Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Research Network (ICanCME)
Full Professor
Department of Stomatology, Faculty of Dentistry
Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine, Faculty of Medicine
Université de Montréal
Scientific Director
Viscogliosi Laboratory in Molecular Genetics of Musculoskeletal Diseases
Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center,
3175 Cote-Ste-Catherine Road, Montreal, Qc, H3T 1C5, Canada

Patrick O. McGowan, PhD

Associate Professor Departments of Biological Sciences, Cell and Systems Biology, Psychology, Physiology
University of Toronto SW-548,
1265 Military Trail, Toronto ON M1C1A4 Canada
www.utoronto.ca/~pmcgowan
Lab Twitter: @MethylNation

NEW ZEALAND**Rosamund Vallings MNZM, MBBS**

Howick Health and Medical Clinic
Howick, Auckland
New Zealand

Lynette Hodges, PhD

Clinical Exercise Physiologist/Senior Lecturer in Exercise Science.
School of Sport, Exercise and Nutrition,
Massey University,
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North, New Zealand

Dr Eiren Sweetman

Department of Biochemistry,
University of Otago, New Zealand

Don Baken PhD, PGDipClinPsych

Registered Clinical Psychologist
Research Coordinator
Massey University

Campbell Murdoch, Honorary Professor
Department of General Practice and Rural Health,
University of Otago
New Zealand

AUSTRALIEN

Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik

Co- Director National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases
Professor immunology, Menzies Health Institute Queensland,
Gold Coast campus,
Griffith University, QLD 4222

Neil R. McGregor BDS, MSc, PhD⁵

Clin. Assoc. Prof. University of Melbourne
Adj. Prof. Victoria University

Professor Donald R Staines

National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases
Griffith University

Dr Brett A. Lidbury, Ph.D. FFSc (RCPA)

Associate Professor, The National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, RSPH,
College of Health and Medicine,
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2601 Australia.
W: <http://nceph.anu.edu.au/about-us/people/brett-lidbury>
T: 02-6125 7875

Paul Fisher

Professor of Microbiology,
La Trobe University,
VIC 3086,

Leighton Barnden

Medical scientist,
National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases,
Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University

⁵ Post-exertional malaise is associated with changes in glycolysis and acetylation in ME/CFS patients. These changes are consistent with a hypo-acetylation state and are likely to significantly alter histone acetylation and the actions of acetylation and deacetylation in controlling cellular enzymatic events. Well-designed studies evaluating these important factors are warranted (McGregor Neil R. et al: Post-Exertional Malaise Is Associated with Hypermetabolism, Hypoacetylation and Purine Metabolism Deregulation in ME/CFS Cases <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4418/9/3/70>)