

UK Society for Behavioural Medicine
<http://www.uksbm.org.uk>

Sir David Cooksey
Consultation Responses
Cooksey Review Secretariat
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

24th July 2006

Dear Sir David,

Re: Review of UK Health Research

As the President and Vice-President of the recently formed UK Society for Behavioural Medicine, we are writing on behalf of the Executive Committee of our society to express our views about the future of UK Health Research.

The consultation document invites respondents to raise any issues not covered in the questions that they consider important. We are very concerned about two interrelated issues:

- 1) The emphasis of health research in the UK remains centred on the ‘wet-lab’ molecular and cellular approach to disease. This means that other equally important basic sciences, including the behavioural and social sciences, as well as mathematical and other sciences of importance to medicine and health, get little or no investment. One result of this has been that the UK has fallen far behind the US and other countries in many aspects of health research that are likely to become more important in the future. We believe that the body that follows on from the current MRC and NHS R&D has to take a wider view of health sciences.
- 2) The increasing emphasis on linking health research to commercial interests and wealth creation, is in our view, dangerous. Many of the emerging technologies that look most promising for the management of people with chronic disease, such as cognitive behavioural therapies, offer few commercial opportunities. Our concern is that such approaches may be increasingly marginalised. An important way of combating that risk is to have an independent health research body that is not influenced by any political or

commercial interests, and which takes a broader approach to health and health care than that taken by either the current MRC or NHS R&D.

We feel passionately about these issues and would be happy to expand on our views or discuss them further with you or your colleagues if that were helpful. Some aspects of our perception of the present problem with UK health research are covered in a recent BMJ editorial (BMJ2006, Feb 25th, 332: 437-8).

Yours sincerely

Theresa Marteau (President of UKSBM)

Professor of Health Psychology
Psychology & Genetics Research Group
Department of Psychology (at Guy's)
King's College London
5th Floor Thomas Guy House
Guy's Campus
London SE1 9RT

Paul Dieppe (Vice President of UKSBM)

Director MRC HSRC
Department of Social Medicine
Canyng Hall
Whiteladies Road
BRISTOL BS8 2PR