

PE1463/FFF

4th February 2016

Dear Convener and Members of the Petitions Committee,

Having accessed the newly published papers for the petition committee meeting on 9th February, I was surprised to see that Dr Graham Leese will be giving evidence, as well as representatives from the Scottish Government and I would very much appreciate the further opportunity to address the committee.

I realise that it's only two months since the committee permitted me to address them and that time is very limited. However, it seems clear to me that the expert evidence will omit the patient reality and, as happened at the Round Table meeting in 2013, will instead reiterate the accepted wisdom. It's that accepted wisdom which is keeping thousands of patients ill and we remain in a circular argument.

Much of the evidence in the updated British Thyroid Association statement of May 2015 is rated moderate or low quality. The Association of Clinical Biochemistry which wrote the Guidelines for the Use of Thyroid Function Tests in 2006 admit that the quality of evidence to support their recommendations is also poor, and say so in their own document. That poor quality evidence has not improved any in the intervening ten years. It's these nuances which the committee, understandably, will not have knowledge of and yet it's these issues which underpin the whole acknowledged controversy regarding the treatment of hypothyroidism.

Finally, from a paper included in the petition, from the BMJ -

“ Experience has shown that thyroid function tests, like all the signs and symptoms associated with hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism, are not totally reliable. As it becomes clear that biochemical assessments cannot deliver the diagnostic accuracy expected of them, the fact that the clinical aspects of assessing thyroid dysfunction are being sidelined is a cause for concern. Doing more biochemical tests will lead to further confusion, not the hoped for clarity. The information obtained from thyroid function tests, despite its quantitative numerical appearances, is “soft.” How soft has yet to be established.” <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1127319/>

If the committee would keep these issues in mind, it will surely enable us to progress beyond the usual official speak that constantly downplays the problem or even denies there is one.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Cleaver, Petitioner