



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA**

JIM DOBBIN MP

17 October 2011

Dear Professor Strang,

In neither of your letters to me have you addressed the unresolved issue of your conflicts of interest. During the period of time in which you tendered for and produced the NTA literature review you had a consultancy with Genus Pharmaceuticals who manufacture the benzodiazepine tranquillisers lorazepam, lormetazepam and oxazepam. Genus is a wholly owned subsidiary of Clonmel Healthcare who manufactures the benzodiazepine diazepam and the Z drugs Zopiclone and Zolpidem. All of these drugs were part of the subject matter of your report and so you clearly had a serious conflict of interest. You did not declare this conflict of interest when you submitted your tender to the Department of Health for commissioning of the review, furthermore you made a false declaration that you had no conflict of interest. The declaration of interest that you have subsequently attached to the review after publication is incomplete because you do not specify your financial relationships are with tranquilliser manufacturers. It has recently come to my attention that you also have undeclared conflicts of interest regarding codeine based over the counter products which were also part of the subject matter of your review. These products are manufactured by Clonmel Healthcare, Reckitt Benckiser Pharmaceuticals and Napp Pharmaceuticals all of which companies you have a financial relationship with.

You were commissioned to produce a review of the available literature and have claimed to have produced a comprehensive literature review. However your literature review is highly selective and biased. Most notably Professor Ashton's voluminous work on tranquillisers and tranquilliser withdrawal is virtually ignored. I have given further examples of your bias in my letter of September 5th to the Public Health Minister Anne Milton MP. These include the under reporting of the literature on long term damage, the post withdrawal syndrome and benzodiazepine related health decline. You have not reviewed the literature or data on tranquilliser related deaths or "benzo-babies" and you dismissed the evidence of benzodiazepine related brain damage. This letter is on the APPGITA website together with John Perrott's criticisms with which you are already familiar.

The Department of Health announced a review of policy on addiction to prescribed drugs in July 2009. This announcement was the result of many years and decades of campaigning by recovering tranquilliser addicts and addiction workers who had brought to the attention of Ministers that there was a substantial tranquilliser problem and no effective government policy. The literature review was commissioned as the

cornerstone of the policy review and awaited in the anticipation that it would provide the information and insight needed for Ministers to tackle the harms caused by this highly addictive and toxic group of drugs. In particular your review was an opportunity to guide the Department towards provision of the specialized withdrawal services that are necessary for the successful treatment of involuntary tranquilliser addiction.

Instead we received your muddled and biased review much of which was concerned with opiates and drug misuse and nothing to do with the subject matter contained in the terms of reference. The practical effect of your work is that the knowledge and understanding of the Department of Health has not been improved at all, in fact misunderstanding and confusion have been increased. It provides no basis for policy development with the default outcome of no coherent policy, no appropriate withdrawal services and the problem being swept back under the carpet. This outcome does not benefit anyone except the manufacturers of tranquillisers. Your irresponsible intervention in this subject, which you clearly do not understand, has caused enormous harm to patients who are dependent upon, withdrawing from or recovering from addiction to tranquillisers.

In light of the above circumstances there is no reason for me to meet with you. In my opinion the correct course of action is for you to write to Anne Milton MP repudiating the NAC literature review.

Yours sincerely

Jim Dobbin MP

Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Involuntary Tranquilliser Addiction

cc Rt. Hon. Andrew Lansley MP

Anne Milton MP

The Earl of Sandwich

The Earl Howe

Lord Mancroft

Eric Ollerenshaw MP

Debbie Abrahams MP

Deirdre Boyd

Professor Heather Ashton