

[Letter for xxxxx, received 18 January 2011]

I had suffered from CFS/ME for nearly 8 years when on March 18th 2009 I had my first appointment with doctor Lewith with my sister in attendance. I had had tonsillitis a week before and so was suffering from Post Viral Fatigue.

We talked for 7 to 10 minutes about my history and gave a very brief outline of my medical past. I did feel that this was a bit rushed. We discussed my family situation, my relationship with my parents and their divorce - he suggested that I was angry with my parents and that this was the cause of my ill health. I thought this was a rather quick conclusion to come to after only a few minutes. I felt uneasy with the discussion not because of the sensitive issues, (I am very aware that stress and ME are linked) but with the over familiar tone that Dr Lewith used. He also said that he knew my father, (there is a tenuous connection but they have never met) and claimed to be aware of his skeptical attitude towards complementary medicine. It was then that he suggested that I was angry with my parents.

He said that he would treat me with a mixture of homeopathic medicine and conventional treatments and then hooked me up to a machine to determine any food intolerances. I do not feel that he explained the homeopathic remedies to me at all. Neither did he really explain the necessity for the machine.

He put me off all dairy products and said that he would send me some homeopathic remedies and food supplements. He also sent me to have blood tests done. My total time with Dr Lewith was 30mins (of a 40 min appointment). He has said that he does not keep time in his appointments.

Having suffered with the illness for so long and having been involved with the conventional practices for treating ME with no relief I went to Dr Lewith desperate. I left this first consultation a little shocked at the rushed pace and a little wary of homeopathy but determined to carry on.

I waited for my remedies in the post but only the food supplements and the blood test results arrived.

On April 8th 2009, I went back for my 30 minute follow up consultation. We talked briefly about how I was doing. Dr Lewith exclaimed that I looked so much better than last time and that the treatments that he had sent me had obviously worked. I assumed he meant the food supplements. It quickly transpired that he meant the homeopathic drops that I had never received. I suggested that I was probably better than last time because I was not recently recovering from tonsillitis. My confidence was immediately lost as I felt I was being coerced in to thinking that the drugs he had provided were the reason for my recovery. Someone with knowledge of ME should be aware that a sufferer is not in a permanent state of ill health but generally that they follow what is known as 'Boom and Bust'. I was going through a good patch, which after 8 years of being ill was the normal pattern. This was a maximum 5 minute conversation.

He hooked me up to the machine again still without any real explanation.

He apologized that the drugs had not been sent and checked with the secretary that I hadn't been charged. He then noticed that there was a test missing from the blood tests. He sent me to have another blood test. I ended up paying for a second blood test because of poor organisation. The total time of this consultation was 12 minutes.

I cancelled my next appointment with Dr Lewith having completely lost faith in his methods. I subsequently received two packages of drugs by post which I have returned. Neither at the consultation nor with the packages of drugs was there any explanation of what each drug was prescribed to achieve.

In light of my experiences with Dr Lewith and the knowledge that there was nothing that complementary medicine could do for me (or in fact anyone) I decided to take a year out of university.

It was soon after that Lewith was chasing me for payment of the cancelled appointment and the homeopathic drugs that I had sent back. This was a total of £230. I had already spent nearly £300 already. I refused to pay as I did not feel that I had received the proper medical care that is expected of a GP.

His correspondence were addressed to my father until he told Dr Lewith that his disagreement was with me. It is this that indicates that he had a some what vindictive attitude towards my father and his thoughts on complementary medicine. He threatened to lay a claim against me at the small claims court. I was appalled that this relatively small amount of money was being claimed from me as a matter of principal of his medical professionalism. For, if principal mattered to him at all he would not be in the business of complementary medicine. I submitted both a Defence and Counterclaim to his action against me.

We went to court yesterday where Dr Lewith did not attend. At every step of this process he has failed to comply with my demands as well as the courts. I had asked him 3 times to have copies of his medical notes from my consultations. He eventually replied asking payment for the secretarial costs of sending these notes. I have strong suspicions that he never took any. He failed to submit witness statements and a Defence to my Counterclaim. The judge struck the case off and my costs awarded against Dr Lewith.

His behavior has followed everything that I feared in the practice of complementary medicine and why I had not tried it after 8 years of illness. Conventional medicine had not been successful in helping me with ME and at 20 years old and at university I was desperate for a cure. I feel that complementary medicine takes advantage of people in my situation - I witnessed extortionate fees, blatant coercion to believe that it was working and blasé professionalism.

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