Scientific & Professional Advisory Board

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Scientific & Professional Advisory Board continued

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University of Oxford

Professor Dan B Wright
Professor of Psychology
Florida International University

Useful definitions

"No evidence exists for the repression and recovery of verified, severely traumatic events...."

"There is no reliable means of distinguishing a true memory from an illusion one other than by external confirmation."

BFMS

BFMS (British False Memory Society) was founded in 1993 in response to an epidemic of false claims of past child abuse by adults in therapy. The accusers believed they had “recovereed” unconscious memories of a hidden past, but scientific evidence demonstrates that rather than being the recall of genuine experience, the process described was one of the accumulation of false belief—hence the term “false memory”.

Such allegations are not a new phenomenon—they have been known to arise under certain cultural conditions for centuries. However, flawed therapeutic trauma theories and investigative systems have exaggerated the problem over the last twenty years with the result that there is now a widespread problem of poor differentiation between true and false allegations of child sexual abuse. This is particularly the case with uncorroborated retrospective allegations that have created the greatest problem in recent times.

Naturally the BFMS acknowledges and abhors the fact that there are many genuine cases of child abuse that require the application of the criminal law. However, the circumstantial reliability of testimony needs to be properly investigated to protect genuine victims and exonerate the falsely accused. As it is, many families and individuals have their lives devastated through the destructive effects of false allegations. It is not uncommon for a whole network of family relationships to be destroyed through false allegations made both in and out of therapy.

BFMS has a Scientific and Professional Advisory Board and is the leading charity addressing the problem of false accusations of child abuse.

The Purposes of BFMS

- BFMS aims to promote accurate differentiation between true and false allegations of child sexual abuse through raising public, professional and policy maker awareness; organising conferences and seminars; disseminating relevant information through newsletters and academic research and assisting the media, where appropriate, to produce suitable articles and programmes.

- BFMS incorporates a telephone helpline to support families and individuals affected by false memory and false abuse allegations. BFMS also offers advice and access to legal assistance. However, we do not offer counselling services nor do we have in-house legal advisors, although both these matters are open to general discussion.

- BFMS provides information and advice to mental health, welfare, criminal justice and legal professionals. In addition it can provide an individual case analysis service in relation to criminal and civil litigation on a reasonable fee basis.

- BFMS aims to improve the understanding of false child abuse allegations including false memory by encouraging, sponsoring, conducting and publishing academic and professional research.

Management and Administration

Madeline Greenhalgh, Director
Carolyn Dutch, Administrator

Board of Trustees
Sally Thompson (Chair)
Bernard Reed OBE
Anne Noble
Andrew Entwistle
Sarah Bennett

Membership

The BFMS warmly welcomes as members all those who support its aims.* Benefits of membership include a newsletter, attendance at the AGM with voting rights, and preferential rates for conferences.

Full details and application forms may be obtained from the address given. Prospective members may be assured that all information given to the Society is treated in the strictest confidence.

* In order to safeguard these aims, the BFMS does not accept applications from followers of any organisation where sexual relationships between adults and children have been encouraged or condoned, or from anyone who holds or has held such views.