

## **All in the mind: An illness called "Cough"**

It has been found that a large number of people in the U.K. suffer from "Cough". The Best Treatment Institute has now issued guidelines for treatment of this condition. Firstly, no expensive medical investigations need be carried out and no system of sub-groups within the condition need to be set-up. Patients suffering from multiple symptoms have been excluded from research studies, as they would only complicate outcomes.

It has been found that the underlying cause of "Cough" is anxiety, which may relate to specific events or be a long-term state of mind. Talking therapy and breathing exercises have shown very promising results in the recent S.T.C. (Stop That Cough) trial. Some participants in the trial found that fruit pastilles had a calming effect. The treatment directive is therefore based on a combination of these three: talking therapy, breathing exercises, soothing pastilles.

Does all this sound improbable? Then take care what illness you go down with. There is one condition in the U.K. which can last for years, devastating the lives of sufferers and their families. It is actually named in the medical world by one of its symptoms, which happens to be a symptom of many conditions, some serious, some trivial; some psychological some physical. But attempts to distinguish it from other conditions are frowned upon and extensive investigations are not to be carried out. It is actually classified by the W.H.O. as neurological, although in most cases there is multi-system involvement. It is not unusual for studies set up in the U.K. to exclude those with neurological symptoms but include a mixed bunch of physical and mental conditions. All research funded by the government is of a psychological nature, but results are said to relate to the physical condition of those who have been excluded from studies.

So, if you are unfortunate enough to suffer from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.), you will be told that you have "chronic fatigue" and offered talking therapy and exercise programmes under psychiatric supervision. If you are severely affected by the condition it is very unlikely that you will make it to the nearest "chronic fatigue" clinic as you are no doubt house-bound or completely bed-bound.

Internationally there is a lot of good research into the physical causes of M.E. In the U.K. such research is carried out by dedicated individuals and self-help groups. One Doctor recently went public stating that after attending an International conference he had realised that he had been wrong: this is a serious illness. Oh that more Doctors would be we willing to state openly that the children, teenagers and adults with severe M.E. known to them, have not chosen to miss out on all the joys of normal living. Their severe illness needs to be acknowledged. Maybe the medical profession could show a little humility, in that complex conditions not yet fully understood should not be deemed to be "all in the mind".