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ONE CLICK SYNOPSIS: Psychologist Lisa Blakemore Brown publishes **Curves and Swerves:** *'Tricks used by Professor Baron-Cohen and the British government to avoid what is staring them in the face in autism'*. Blakemore Brown takes the lid off autism funding in the UK, Home Secretary Jacqui Smith MP, Professor Simon Baron-Cohen and his girlfriend, the UK National Autistic Society and Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, together with providing original correspondence.

THE POLITICS AND COMMERCE OF AUTISM

Curves and Swerves

Tricks used by Professor Baron-Cohen
and the British government to avoid
what is staring them in the face in autism

By Lisa Blakemore Brown
Psychologist



Over the last few years, given the frightening epidemic of autism and the appalling suffering of so many, I have been bewildered by the choice of research undertaken by those who have been able to get funding from the UK Government. It has become increasingly obvious that the elephant in the room – vaccines linked to autism, cot death and other conditions – is being ignored as are those who have suffered, unless of course they are blamed. Blame theories (such as Munchausen by Proxy) form another elephant that people have turned a blind eye to and if you read this article you will see that MSBP is intertwined with vaccines issues.

Meanwhile extraordinarily obscure theories are given funding, presumably because they will usefully distract attention from the real issues. However, the recent stories in the media about Simon Baron-Cohen's research on prenatal bio-markers have led us up the dark path of eugenics.



Simon Baron-Cohen, Psychologist

Professor Baron-Cohen himself has come out to say that his research has been misrepresented by The Guardian but no-where does he address the real and pressing issues now being opened up in the US, which we have all been aware of for more than a decade: that we can map the rise in autism onto the changes in the vaccine programme; that research has been covered up which showed the damaging effects on children of mercury in vaccines; that dysfunctioning mitochondria can make an infant susceptible to adverse reactions to vaccines and that this in itself can be an adverse reaction to vaccines. Gradually once high ranking officials are standing up and getting counted on what they know, but in Britain we are silenced by a Government which claims to care about people, their futures and their human rights.

It is shocking that autistic children and their suffering is routinely ignored for years and years, until Professor Baron-Cohen suggests casually to the world [via the BBC](#) that autism may one day be picked up in the womb. Suddenly we hear of the terrible lives many children and their families have to endure, in order to justify the idea of aborting them before they are born. Perhaps Professor Baron-Cohen should address the possibility that these bio-markers may simply show which children might react to vaccines and their components such as mercury and aluminium and the tapestry effect when live viruses are introduced? In which case it's the damaging vaccines that need terminating not the babies! It beggars belief that we can wrongly blame parents, deny the suffering of children which is staring us in the face, raise the spectre of eugenics: yet we are not allowed to even whisper that there might just be something wrong in the vaccine programme. These trivial pieces of research, costing the earth, take the focus away from what really may have caused damage to *normal* children to make them autistic. This latest piece of research has caused terrible distress and damage to multiple thousands of families the world over.

Without any doubt now in my mind this issue is entirely political and commercial and given the history of the way in which this Government operates generally, any psychologist who is receiving funding or support from this Government must be controlled by it. This situation has become worse and worse as the epidemic has grown and the more children with the problem, the more suffering and evidence of the catastrophic effect on the nation's health and education, crime statistics etc, the more this is covered up by various methods, some highly cynical including conjuring up bizarre parent blame theories. We are facing a disaster. Below I outline a sample of some of the events known to me personally, occurring over the years which make me deeply concerned about what has been going on in this country in the name of autism.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith MP and the UK National Autistic Society

It's a full seven years (February 2002) since the New Labour Government's then Minister for Health, Jacqui Smith (now Home Secretary), announced at a major strategic conference on autism at the Kings Fund Centre that £2.5 million pounds

was to be invested in autism and given to the Medical Research Council (MRC) to distribute. The BBC reported that the *“new research will also focus on large population studies to examine the effect of genetics and environmental factors”*. See [HERE](#)



Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith MP

In that same BBC article, Judith Barnard of the National Autistic Society stated *“In particular, the area of physiology and infections was seen to be the weakest in terms of what was known about it, and the work that had been undertaken on it. It is increasingly clear, however, that physiological, pathological and immunological factors play an important role in this condition. Autism spectrum disorders are strongly genetic but not wholly so. This means that environmental factors are also involved, but these remain a mystery and urgent research is needed to look at potential candidates”*.

Various other events were occurring at the same time which brought me personally in touch with the NAS, Jacqui Smith and Judith Barnard and which draw these issues about autism research, vaccines and MSBP together.

Munchausen Syndrome By Proxy

I had been speaking out since 1997 about my enormous concerns that the label Munchausen by Proxy was being wrongly applied to families, especially families of children with autism and related disorders causing irreparable damage to falsely accused parents and their children. My Letter of Concern was published in *The Psychologist*, Journal of the British Psychological Society in September 1997. See [HERE](#)

When I first became aware of serious problems in the system, having been an Expert Witness in a MSBP case with Dr David Southall as another witness, I mentioned it to Jack Straw MP as I was Chair of a group of psychologists, all members of the British Psychological Society, advising him at the time.

I mentioned that in at least one case the parents were going to take their profound concerns to Strasbourg and to the European Court of Human Rights. Mr Straw said there was no need for that – because the Labour Party was bringing the Human Rights legislation to the UK. This astounded me as the reason families were heading to Europe was because they knew the UK had got it wrong. I felt very uneasy. After I spoke on a New Zealand documentary I was reported to the British Psychological Society by the Social Services Department who I considered had wrongly taken four children into care using MSBP. This began an 11 year ordeal of being wrongly accused myself and hounded, causing enormous damage to my family, my career and my reputation. At the same time as I wrote another article in 1998 on the dangerousness of False Allegations of MSBP in *The Therapist* where Professor Roy Meadow had written on the subject a year earlier, he was Knighted by the Labour Government.

A Consultation Exercise was ongoing into MSBP in 2002 and on receiving an early copy of the Guidelines to be sent out across the country I was horrified to see so much potential for harm to children and families. One page stood out. It listed behaviours which neatly map onto autism spectrum disorders, but next to each behaviour was an assumption about that behaviour which read as if the behaviour was a result of abuse. This may be the case but as the behaviours were typical of autism I could foresee tremendous damage being done by the wrong sort of training using these Guidelines. I immediately contacted colleagues at the National Autistic Society and they were just as horrified, vowing to do something about it. I sent an 11 page document to the Department of Health in relation to those Guidelines on MSBP, or Factitious Illness as they also called it.

I was contacted by Judith Barnard and asked to speak at a conference looking at various matters pertaining to autism and they wanted me to speak on my concerns about MSBP. I agreed and this went ahead at Regents College in Regents Park London. I was also asked to meet with Judith Gould at the National Autistic Society to discuss matters. They apologised for not taking seriously my concerns in 1997, saying that they too now had a family being destroyed by a false allegation of MSBP and had finally seen what I had been trying to tell them some 5 years earlier. There was understandable deep concern about the Guidelines and the section I had picked out. Subsequently Judith Gould, Lorna Wing and Judith Barnard attended a meeting at the Department of Health.

They met Jacqui Smith and a civil servant, Jenny Gray. I was not invited to the meeting and from that time on no-one contacted me again from the NAS, well certainly not in a supportive manner. Something clearly happened at that meeting. My book, [Reweaving the Autistic Tapestry: Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD](#) is the only book on autism published by Jessica Kingsley that the NAS do not carry. I address concerns about the use of MSBP, concerns about the possibility that vaccines are implicated in autism, and a full chapter on how the educational system failed children with special educational needs.

The British Psychological Society – Vexatious Complaint

In August 2002, I won against the BPS on yet another vexatious complaint with the barrister telling the BPS that the matter should never have been brought. There was evidence of forgery and downright lies yet this had been known by the BPS who carried matters on for 18 months. I began to ask more questions of the Department of Health and sent a letter asking them to reassure me that they were concerned enough about children to stop these failings. I received a curt letter from Jacqui Smith shifting the focus on to the Laming Enquiry. My concern was generally with incompetence at all levels – whether children were left to suffer in abusive homes or wrongly taken from good homes to suffer in care, as well as specifically about MSBP. Ms Smith ended her 2002 letter by telling me *“I can assure you that your comments have been noted”*. Mmm.. See letter from Jacqui Smith MP, Department of Health, to Lisa Blakemore Brown [HERE](#).

Forced to sell my home to pay the lawyers who represented me at the vexatious Hearing, I moved to London after the Director of the Science Park at Brunel University invited me to take an office and build a Centre of Excellence for Autism. He considered I was a pioneer and should be at a University to develop my thinking.

Trying to put the bad experiences behind me, I took heart that I had the book out, the prospect of creating a Centre for autism where research and training for various professionals could be undertaken as well as assessments and had also been part of a BBC documentary filmed in my former office at Brunel (My Family and Autism).

Given the profound need for such efforts and such facilities espoused by none other than Jacqui Smith at the Kings Fund Centre just a few months earlier and the considerable media exposure of the wrongful convictions of women accused of killing their children by Professor Sir Roy Meadow, I had every reason to feel optimistic about the Centre, my own future and that of the children I dedicated my working life to.

Within a matter of weeks another vexatious complaint was drummed up with a group called ADDISS heavily involved at the outset. This group was just beginning to receive considerable funding from Eli Lilly, the pharmaceutical company which first produced Thimerosal, a mercury containing vaccine preservative implicated in the rise in autism. Liam Byrne, a Labour Minister who has also had responsibility for matters linked to autism, defended the funding this same group received from the Department of Health at the same time. He was also brought in to spin out the considerable number of recommendations following a two year Select Committee Parliamentary inquiry into the influence of the Pharmaceutical Industry.

Despite knowing about the actions of this group from a colleague, the British Psychological Society ploughed on. The University was bombarded with vexatious calls relating to me and the Director was told, out of the blue, to take early retirement. It was all quite shocking for everyone.

What Is To Be Done With The Money?

In the summer of 2003 I attended an MRC/NAS meeting. There were many professionals and parents at the meeting and a lot of anger. It seemed that the money given to the MRC for autism research had still not been allocated to anyone some 18 months since the Jacqui Smith announcement! There were poster displays about bowel disorders and real concern that research should look at this increasing problem and the heart wrenching and undeniable suffering of the children.

I checked the NAS bookstall and sure enough my book wasn't there.

I overheard University and Hospital Autism researchers becoming extremely angry and animated about why the money had not been used, where it was going to and why people had failed in their bids. Gillian Baird at the Newcomen Centre spoke out about the issue in public. For some reason there seemed to be fear about giving out the money and what it would be used for.

Judith Barnard and I had a conversation. She said she no longer worked for the NAS! As the concerns about vaccines being implicated in autism grew and grew, and the money given by the Government was to include looking at environment possibilities, Judith had quite appropriately expected this would be an area of research and her comments to the BBC reflected her position. It appears that this was not wanted by the NAS. In a discussion with the Director she said the NAS, as a parent organisation had to stand by parents and their concerns over vaccines and begin the research. She was told by the Director that the opposite was the

case – it would be folly to look at vaccines. Soon she found she was being left out of important decision making. In the end she left.

It became clear that those who received the grants from this Government would be those who turned a blind eye to the pressing matters of this age and who did the sort of research this Government liked. Cambridge and the work of Simon Baron-Cohen rapidly shot up the ladder in terms of funding, media coverage and kudos. In normal times the sort of research being undertaken at Cambridge would of course be valued and appreciated if only for being supportive of people with autism. But these are not normal times. An urgent focus is needed to explain why there are so many autistic children. We cannot have a genetic epidemic. There has to have been something introduced into the environment in the countries where this rise is witnessed. This is what the money should have been spent on. Something terrible has happened to multiple thousands of children. For many their lives are ruined, as are those of their families and Governments should not be dictating how we should operate, what we work on and what we say in public. Of course if we are reliant on them for funding we may go down the slippery slope and end up as good men doing nothing.

The worse matters have become in terms of the clear evidence of an epidemic and the associated suffering and denial of needs of children, and the more controlling this Government, its officials and the various bodies linked to it have become. Another Psychologist specialising in Autism left the country in disgust at the corruption. See [US child expert quits Britain over 'hidden crisis' in special needs](#), The Observer.

The Consensus Report – Family Law Reform

So profoundly damaging were false allegations of MSBP that a highly detailed document, [Consensus](#), was put together setting down all the faults of MSBP/FII Guidelines produced under the auspices of the Department of Health. In particular one civil servant, Bruce Clark, was named as being in control of the process. He worked with Jenny Gray (who incidentally had worked with David Southall at Great Ormond Street). This 104 page, highly researched and well referenced document was delivered to Parliament in 2005. I contributed to this document and gave a copy to Virginia Bovell who I knew through both of us helping Debbie Storey, the tragic mother of 2 Asperger boys, accused of MSBP and refused support, who found she had kidney cancer and died just months after the boys names were removed from the At Risk Register. Virginia felt it would help to bring people with different views together on this Consensus issue and arranged a lunch.

At the lunch was a representative from the Department of Health, two people from the NAS and Simon Baron-Cohen's partner, a lawyer who ran a Family Rights organisation. Apologies for forgetting names. The Department of Health representative stated early on that "Consensus is dead in the water"!!! at which point Simon Baron-Cohen's partner, as she was introduced, became quite angry. The anger was clearly directed at me and at this Consensus document. She said that her firm had 16 projects currently awaiting approval by Bruce Clark, and if he lost his job as a result of the Consensus effort, all those projects would fall. She needn't have worried. It was Consensus that fell. I am sure she, like Simon, are doing a sterling job helping families with all this Government support.

Around the same time an astonishing bit of evidence emerged from a Freedom of Information request at the Department of Health. It drew together the different

areas of work which I had found myself in the thick of – Sir Roy Meadow of MSBP fame, was involved in the commercial side of vaccine research!!! His name appeared quite clearly in sub committee meetings of the JVIC alongside Dr Elizabeth Miller, Dr David Salisbury from the Department of Health and other notable people. Of course in the Sally Clark case Sir Roy Meadow damned Sally when he claimed there was a 73 million to 1 chance that her babies died naturally – and all the while he knew that they had had recent vaccinations, one of them just five hours before he died. He also knew, as a Member of these meetings on vaccine safety, that adverse reactions happened, and that they could include cot death. An article by Neville Hodgkinson in The Spectator discusses many of the disturbing implications. See [Clark's child?](#), *Neville Hodgkinson asks why the jury in the Sally Clark trial was told to discount the DTP jab given to her second child, Harry, just five hours before he was found dead*

Other families known to me have seen their children die or develop autism following vaccines only to be accused of MSBP. Sir Roy Meadow features in many.

Even though the media have been silenced in this Brave New World of New Labour in these medieval millennium years, this information is well known to millions around the world thanks to the internet.

Simon Baron-Cohen – Facing The Consequences

Yet all we hear is propaganda or silence whilst once respected professionals take the shilling and take us into the most dangerous territory yet – the prospect of tests for babies who may be susceptible to autism – or is that to vaccine damage? – leading to parents being offered abortions. Simon Baron-Cohen may be a very nice chap, he certainly seems it, and he may have realised his words have caused a great deal of distress by being misunderstood and is making efforts to distance himself, but he has gone down the slippery slope helped by this Government. They have also helped him to become a lead voice in autism and as he has turned his back on what is staring us all in the face then he must face the consequences. The children and all the families will certainly have to unless something changes fast.

Lisa Blakemore Brown, Psychologist

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Related Links:

- * [Simon Baron-Cohen Scientifically Slammed By AT Trust](#)
Dr Lorene E.A. Amet, Principal Scientist, Autism Treatment Trust
- * [Simon Baron-Cohen - Common Humanity Failure](#)
John Stone/Simon Baron-Cohen/The One Click Group
- * [Simon Baron-Cohen: 'Thinking differently about autism'](#)
John Stone
- * [The Consensus Report](#)
Family Law Reform
