

2017 Special Service Award: Dr. David Tuller

Presented by Dr. Fred Friedberg

The next award, our special award, goes to Dr. David Tuller for his outstanding investigative reporting on ME/CFS over the years, and in particular, his most recent reporting of the issues with the PACE trial and its harmful impact on the treatment of ME/CFS.

David has a doctorate in Public Health from UC Berkeley and is the academic coordinator of the University's joint masters program in public health and journalism. David's first article on ME/CFS was in 2007 in the New York Times and was followed by stories about XMRV and an article on the PACE trial in 2011.

We all know the PACE story. The 5 million pound study, the largest ever conducted on ME/CFS, was based on the theory that ME/CFS is the result of false cognitions and resultant deconditioning that could be reversed with cognitive behavioral therapy and graded exercise therapy. Since the publication of PACE in 2011, a group of patient scientists have raised concerns with the study design, conduct and conclusions. Others reported survey results that showed the harm to patients from PACE-style treatments.

But these reports were largely ignored. Treatments based on PACE and similar studies were recommended in "evidence-based" reviews and clinical care guidelines. The mainstream research and clinical care community remained largely unaware of the problems with these recommendations until David published the results of his own investigation in a series of articles on Virology Blog in October 2015. For the first time, academics from outside the ME/CFS field were exposed to PACE. These experts have since confirmed PACE's problems and have publicly criticized the positive reception of PACE in published literature and clinical guidelines. Other academics have highlighted PACE as an example of the need for stronger data sharing policies and have also begun to use it as a case study of problematic study conduct in graduate school seminars and at academic conferences.

Since 2015, David has published additional articles on PACE, on the efforts to gain access to the PACE data through FOIA, and on the negative impact of PACE on clinical care.

We are at a critical juncture in the history of this disease, poised to make dramatic strides forward in both research and clinical care. David has played an important role in helping to make that happen.

Thank you, David.