

According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCP) in February 2010, “There is no sound scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed”.<sup>i</sup> Led by their Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group, the College states that “so-called treatments of homosexuality create a setting in which prejudice and discrimination flourish”.

In July of the same year, the representatives at an ethics meeting of the British Medical Association (BMA) voted in favour of a motion insisting that “the NHS should not fund “discredited” conversion therapy for homosexual people.

A year before a survey of UK psychologists, psychotherapists, and psychiatrists published in the journal BMC Psychiatry had revealed that one in 6 saw fit to offer gay clients therapy to change their sexual orientation<sup>ii</sup>. Of those treated, 40% were on the NHS even though the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* does not list homosexuality as a mental illness.

Also in 2009, the American Psychological Association conducted a systematic review that suggested there was insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation. The review concluded that none of the studies assessed the potential harms of such interventions. They asked “are sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) effective at changing orientation? Their finding was:

“there is little in the way of credible evidence that could clarify whether sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) does or **does not** [emphasis added] work in changing same-sex sexual attractions”<sup>iii</sup>.

The keynote speaker at a Belfast conference on June 14th, Californian Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist David Pickup also offers “Reparative Therapy” to individuals wanting to move away from homosexual behaviour and feelings, and into heterosexuality. He says Reparative Therapy has nothing to do with “Conversion Therapy”, usually attributed to discredited electroconvulsive techniques used by mainstream therapists 60 years ago to try to treat homosexuals.

Pickup, who is an active member of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT,) states that it’s perfectly legitimate to offer clients re-orientation therapy with proper informed consent and thorough expertise in these techniques. He is supported by his professional organisation in doing so and he practices Reparative Therapy within the legal and ethical professional codes in the State of California.

Citing scientists Altman and Bland<sup>iv</sup>, Pickup argues that ‘absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’. “We may not have the gold-standard scientific proof of Random Controlled Trials (RCTs) in this area, but there is enough good research emerging that demonstrates Reparative Therapy in the right hands is an appropriate psychological model for those wanting change”.

“How can we deny any individual the right to self-determination of sexual identity and support in achieving that?” Pickup asks. “The facts are that some people are in conflict with their homosexual feelings because they haven’t worked for them and they are unwilling to accept them in terms of being inconsistent with their true Identity. Explanations about ‘internalised homophobia’ just aren’t working”.

He is alarmed that open discussion among professionals about how to offer appropriate psychological care for those with unwanted homosexual attractions has been shut-down. “Professional bodies are under increasing political pressure to dictate to their members what constitutes ‘valid’ therapeutic approaches. These are based on ideology rather than science or practice. The same pattern is followed all over the world”.

Ends

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David Pickup is a keynote speaker at the Belfast-based Core Issues being held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June at Belvoir Church of Ireland. The conference is called “[Interrogating the Pejoratives](#)”. Other speakers include [Barrister Andrea Minichiello Williams](#). David will be giving an evening address on this topic on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> of June, 70 Wimpole Street, WIG 8AX. Please contact Dr Lisa Nolland for details: 0117 924 4896

David Pickup and Andrea Minichiello Williams will be available for studio or telephone interviews.

For further information please contact

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<sup>i</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Position Statement on Sexual Orientation  
[PS01/2010 – 15 February 2010](#)  
[http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/PS01\\_2010x.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/PS01_2010x.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> BMC Psychiatry 2009, 9:11

<sup>iii</sup> [Report of the APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation. \(2009\)](#). American Psychological Association, Washington DC.

<sup>iv</sup> Altman D and Bland J.M., (1995) *British Medical Journal* V311:4