

# Bad Journalism

David Jones

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Readers often complain about press coverage of counselling and psychotherapy. Why not exercise some power and send all examples (clippings or easy to read photocopies please) of good, bad or mixed press coverage to David Jones at the editorial address inside the front cover? — even if you think we must have seen them ourselves. (We probably haven't!) We will comment on them, print them and alert the newspaper or magazine concerned — and their editors do take this type of feedback seriously.

Angela Neustatter wrote a badly researched piece, full of errors, which was published in the *Independent on Sunday* (17th March). She seems to have phoned up staff at University College London (who are working with Professor Peter Fonagy on a research project for the Department of Health on the effectiveness of psychotherapies) and not listened to what they told her. Here is some of the published nonsense.

She makes the common error of making psychoanalysis stand separately from psychiatry and psychotherapy instead of referring to it as a type of treatment offered by these professions.

She says, 'Psychosynthesis is a form of psychoanalysis'.

She says, 'There is the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy with which reputable training institutes register' (that is true) but then gives the address of the British Association of Psychotherapists (one of the 64 member organisations of the UKCP) which shares a postal address with the British Confederation of Psychotherapists (an important group of

psychoanalytic organisations which split away from the UKCP in 1991) which she does not mention at all.

Under Bioenergetics she gives the address of a (reputable) organisation in Brighton which is too small to be a member of UKCP, and does not mention the Chiron Centre.

I suppose we have only got ourselves to blame when she refers to humanistic psychologists as humanists.

The *Independent on Sunday* printed five letters the following week correcting other errors.

Five minutes on the telephone with Paul Zeal, press relations officer of UKCP, would have prevented a badly misleading article. The address is in the London telephone directory: 167–169 Great Portland Street, London WIN 5FB; Tel 0171 436 3002; Fax 0171 487 7474

The Department of Health review of the effectiveness of psychotherapies will be published as *What Works for Whom? A Critical Review of Psychotherapy Research* by Tony Roth and Peter Fonagy, to be published by Guilford Press.