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Press Complaints Commission  
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January 22 2013

Dear Ms Cobbe

Your ref: 125519

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Thank you for your letter of Dec 19, 2012 enclosing a complaint from the Countess of Mar about a Comment entitled "Chronic fatigue syndrome: where to PACE from here?" by Dr Gijs Bleijenberg and Dr Hans Knoop published online in *The Lancet* ([www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com)) on Feb 18, 2011, and in print on March 5, 2011.

The Comment in question was a commissioned opinion piece discussing a clinical trial, PACE, which investigated different interventions in a particular population of people suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, and was published in a research article at the same time. The complaint takes issue at some length with use of the word "recovery" in the Comment, noting that the PACE trialists did not themselves use this particular word in presenting their findings.

The complaint draws attention to the need for accuracy and for an opportunity to reply. We would like to reject this complaint in the strongest possible terms. We believe that there are no inaccuracies or any failure to reply in this case.

The key points relevant to the PCC code in our view are:

- We take great care not to publish inaccurate material in *The Lancet*. Research papers are thoroughly peer reviewed, and opinion pieces such as Comments are read and discussed by the editorial staff, which includes experienced editors with backgrounds in medicine and science. The Comment in question was reviewed, as is our standard practice, by the authors of the accompanying PACE trial, which included several prominent researchers in the field.

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