

JOANNA PRICE (Lane): Our charity, Christopher Lane Trust, has been approached this year by more and more desperate people. Usually they have been diagnosed with a fatigue illness such as fibromyalgia or metabolic syndrome, but have wanted to know what is causing their symptoms. As well as fatigue, they generally have anxiety and depression, and are often suicidal because their fatigue has wrecked their careers while their loss of libido may have destroyed their relationships. Their own internet researches have generally led them to suspect a pituitary disorder. This is particularly likely if they have ever had a head injury or concussion. The two people I mentioned whom we supported last year (for those who like to hear the end of the story) have both benefited brilliantly, both from having a medical diagnosis that does not imply their problems are all in their mind, and from the increased energy and positivity that treatment has given them. And these good results continue. The wife of one of this year's 'clients' wrote a list of what her husband could do now, that he was too tired to do before – including cooking, laughing, mowing the lawn, going for a walk and not being worn out the next day. We were also approached this year by a 50-year-old man who had a heart attack at the young age of 39 and wanted to know why, but nobody seemed able to tell him. He had to wait ten years, while suffering mental health problems and extreme fatigue, before his own researches and a helpful GP led him to a diagnosis of growth hormone deficiency. Even so he had to approach five major London hospitals before he found one willing to give him the definitive test (the glucagon stimulation test), and then he was found to be severely deficient. He is much better ('can finish the washing-up in one go') but angry that he lost ten years of his life unnecessarily. If those who had treated him had been aware that growth hormone deficiency is strongly associated with cardiovascular disease, he might have been diagnosed far sooner. We were able to persuade Heart UK to include this information on their website, after quite a battle, and after another hard battle we have prevailed upon the British Heart Foundation to do likewise. We very much welcome Chris Bryant MP's initiative to set up a national strategy for the after-care of people with acquired brain injury. We have encouraged several people with post-traumatic hypopituitarism to respond to the Call for Evidence with their shocking stories of decades of non-diagnosis (more than 30 years in one case), suicide attempts, spells in mental hospitals, unending battles with benefits people, and so on. We hope that patients may now be warned about this significant risk after head injury and be given detailed information about the symptoms and the diagnostic tests they need.