

My name is Jussi Valtonen.

I'd like to thank all the speakers for thought-provoking presentations. I think many of us in this room are astounded by many of the things we've heard today, and baffled at how strongly leading experts in the field disagree on what the relevant evidence is and how it should be interpreted.

My own research background is in cognitive neuroscience, but I have been following the international scientific debate about these issues for a little while. As one of the organizers of this meeting, I'd like to say a few words about what I personally think this conversation is about.

I've noticed that in Finland, this conversation easily becomes sidetracked or framed in a way that is neither accurate nor helpful.

At its core, this conversation is not, in my opinion, a dispute among different professional groups. Nor is it a debate about ideological differences in how people should be treated.

In fact, I don't believe our ideologies as mental health professionals should even matter. I believe that ultimately, every patient should be allowed to choose whether they want a particular treatment or not, and that our job as professionals should be to provide adequate and accurate information about the available treatment options.

I would be surprised if many people disagreed about this.

So let me say this one more time. I do not think this conversation, at its very core, is about ideological differences.

That said, some people are clearly more worried than others. I can personally confess that I am one of those who do worry. But my worries are not related to psychiatric drugs per se.

My worries are related to the system that produces our information. I am concerned that there are profound problems in the system that we all rely on for what we know about these treatments. And this – in my personal opinion – is the crux of the matter.

David Healy is a professor of psychiatry in Wales. Marcia Angell is the former editor of the New England Journal of Medicine. Ben Goldacre is a medical doctor and a science writer for the Guardian. Peter Gøtzsche is one of the most distinguished medical researchers in the world.

If you read the works of these authors and many, many others, it is extremely difficult to escape the conclusion that there are serious flaws in the system that produces most of our scientific evidence about drug treatments.

I worry because it seems to me that it has now been shown beyond reasonable doubt that industry-funded research has overemphasized the benefits of drug treatments and understated their risks.

I worry because it seems to me that we now cannot give accurate, adequate and reliable information about these treatments to our patients.

I worry because it seems to me that many people are not aware of the extent of this problem.

I worry because this problem has not been thoroughly discussed in the Finnish media, and I worry because attempts to discuss it very often become framed as being about something else, such as ideological differences or rivalry between professional guilds.

If scientists like professor Gøtzsche are correct, the scientific literature has been corrupted by marketing interests. I personally find this thought unbearable.

I think we all value unbiased, well-conducted scientific research and I believe we all share the ideological view that the scientific body of literature should be reliable and protected from industry interests and corruption.

I wonder if we could all team up. I wonder if we could acknowledge that we have a mutual goal. I wonder if we could work together to figure out how to change the system so that we could trust the published scientific evidence about these treatments again.

I wonder if this meeting could be a first step in that direction in Finland. And finally, I wish we could be careful not to let the media or others frame this conversation incorrectly.

Thank you.