

A 'Health Wise Paris' sub-group **Simply Speaking** will be hosting

A Conversation on the Statutory Regulation of Psychotherapy in France

2pm – 4.30pm Saturday May 16 2009 University of Chicago, Paris

A series of 'Bulletins' are in preparation containing the various questions and responses that have been sent to us. Should you wish to contribute, just send us a mail to simplyspeaking.hwp@gmail.com

Bulletin n° 1

"This new law seeks to protect the public. Up until now, anyone can call himself a psychotherapist in France and vulnerable people are at risk of falling into the hands of therapists who do not necessarily have the competence to deal with the severity of certain cases, or worse, a vulnerable person could encounter somebody who actively seeks to do harm or manipulate them. Isn't this enough to welcome this new move by the French State?"

Responses:

Elisabeth Gurniki's answer to the question of protecting the public from 'so called therapists' without competence or actively seeking to harm them:

The argument of the patients' security to justify a regulation of psychotherapies sounds like basic common sense. Nevertheless it raises very serious questions in a democratic country where patients are not considered as adaptable objects but responsible citizens, even though suffering:

- considering that the validation of therapeutic methods would be based on strictly restrictive references, people would have no choice of different approaches according to a standardised method. History offers an obvious example of such a standardisation: in USSR people were medically or politically prescribed only one sort of therapy. It was a normalising program of re-education aiming at an 'acceptable' adjustment to the political and social power.

- there is no 'evidence based' demonstration of widespread abuse by psychotherapists and no administrative control is going to protect patients from such risks. If it were possible, the NHS would have made unnecessary thousands of law suits between patients

and doctors.

- a restrictive administrative control could make therapists too wary of possible procedures or penalties. It would make them conform to the 'approved practice' and sterilize their own style and creativity.

- psychotherapy is based on intersubjectivity and must not be reduced to the 'normalization' of patients by an educative system that could be applied through a computerized program.