

# Mothers cleared of killing want inquiry into expert

By Rosie Waterhouse

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Parents who claim they have been falsely accused of murdering or abusing their children based on the [suspect evidence of medical experts](#) are staging a protest outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London today.

They are to call for a public inquiry into a controversial diagnosis defined by Professor Sir Roy Meadow, whose expert testimony was discredited in the cases of Sally Clark and Trupti Patel, who were both charged with murdering their children.

Trupti Patel [was acquitted earlier this month](#) of killing three of her babies. Sally Clark [was cleared by the Court of Appeal in January](#) of killing two of her baby sons.

Sir Roy has acted as an expert witness in dozens of cases in which babies have died suddenly and inexplicably, using a controversial diagnosis of Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy (MSbP) to claim that mothers or carers have harmed or killed children and passed off deliberate abuse as natural illness.

Last week the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, announced an investigation into whether there should be a review of all cases involving evidence from either Sir Roy or [Dr Alan Williams, a pathologist who withheld evidence from the jury in the Sally Clark trial](#) which suggested a medical explanation for the death of her second son.

Lord Goldsmith said the review would also [examine Sir Roy's claim that the chance of Sally Clark's two babies dying from accidental injury was one in 73 million](#). The Appeal Court ruled that this statistic had strongly influenced the jury which convicted her. The figure was later disputed by the Royal Statistical Society.

The Crown Prosecution Service [is also considering a review of all Sir Roy's criminal cases](#). MPs and peers are calling for an investigation into all cases in which he has appeared.

Now aged 70 and retired, he first defined MSbP in a paper in the medical journal *The Lancet* in 1977, when he worked in the Department of Paediatrics at Seacroft Hospital in Leeds.

Both Sally Clark and Trupti Patel were accused by Sir Roy of suffering from MSbP.

Since then more than 100 families have had their children taken into care by social services departments, and a further six mothers including Sally Clark have been imprisoned for infanticide on the evidence of Sir Roy, after hearings in the family courts.

Such proceedings are confidential and parents are barred from speaking out publicly to defend themselves.

Today's demonstration is partly to protest at the secrecy of these proceedings and to highlight the failure of the General Medical Council to act on complaints against doctors involved in allegations of MSbP over the last 12 years.

Lord Howe, shadow health and social services spokesman, has called the diagnosis of MSbP "one of the most pernicious and ill-founded theories to have gained currency in child care and social services in the past 10 to 15 years".

"It is a theory without science," he said. "There is no body of peer-reviewed research to underpin MSbP. It rests on the assertions of its inventor, Sir Roy Meadow."

When challenged to produce his research papers to justify his original findings, Sir Roy claimed that he had destroyed them, Lord Howe said.

Penny Mellor, organiser of today's protest, said: "This is even worse than the Cleveland child abuse scandal when so-called medical experts were allowed to propagate their theories, without proper scientific validation, leading to parents losing their children."