

# James Randi Educational Foundation (/site/)

## JREF Swift Blog

### This Cruel Farce Has To Stop!

#### Details

Written by James Randi

 Published: 24 November 2009



#### Update!

**For those who may need further evidence for my contention, the proof can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/ye9d9lp> (<http://tinyurl.com/ye9d9lp>) -- where it is clearly seen that the “facilitator” is looking directly at the keyboard, while the subject is *asleep!* There can be no further doubt. This FC claim is simply untrue, a farce, a lie – and the “facilitator” knows it! And no, this man is *not* going to write a book, but the "facilitator" is, and if this humbug is not stopped, she'll make a fortune doing so. Put a stop to this, someone!"**

**But who will see that the caretakers for this unfortunate man are corrected and made to answer for this situation?**

Original article:

I'm enraged. Several perceptive persons have sent me to [msnbc.com](http://msnbc.com) (<http://msnbc.com/>) - where we can see Dr. Nancy Snyderman relating a story. It's a heartrender, described thus by Dr. Snyderman:

A mother [in Belgium] says her son has emerged from what doctors thought was a vegetative state to say he was fully conscious for 23 years but could not respond because he was paralyzed.

No, that is *not* what the man said, Dr. Snyderman. That's what an incompetent layperson typed for him! I ask you to first go to <http://tinyurl.com/y8lku48> (<http://tinyurl.com/y8lku48>), and note the section of the video from 12 to 35 seconds, then come back here.

This is yet another obvious example of abysmal, practiced, purposeful ignorance by medical personnel - *including* Dr. Snyderman and her staff who prepared this piece. I cannot understand how anyone, professional medical person or layman, can continue to believe that the farce known as "Facilitated Communication" [FC] represents anything other than a fantasy that was begun back in 1977, when an Australian woman named Rosemary Crossley came up with the idea that autistic persons could express their thoughts via a keyboard when their hand was "supported" by what she called a "facilitator." In 1989, Douglas Biklen ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas\\_Biklen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Biklen)), a sociologist and professor of special education at Syracuse University ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syracuse\\_University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syracuse_University)), eagerly took up her cause, and as a result vast sums were donated to SU by friends and family members of autism victims - money that was simply wasted in futile "research."

I personally investigated this matter. In March of 1992 I was contacted by Dr. Anne M. Donnellan, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who asked if I would be willing to participate in an investigation of FC as used with autistic children. I was already familiar with FC, and suggested to her that I felt the researchers were perhaps under the influence of the Clever Hans Effect [CHE], also known as the "ideomotor effect," in which the trainer -

the facilitator in this case - was unconsciously transmitting the information to the autistic child. This possibility was emphatically denied by Dr. Donnellan, and I was assured that every care had been taken to ensure that the CHE was not in operation. The Clever Hans Effect is notorious in psychology. Early in the last century, a horse named Clever Hans - in German, *der Kluge Hans* - was claimed to have been able to perform arithmetic and other simple intellectual tasks. In 1907, psychologist Oskar Pfungst ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oskar\\_Pfungst](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oskar_Pfungst)) showed *conclusively* that the horse was not actually performing these mental tasks, but was reacting to cues provided by his trainer.

My tests of autistic children at the University of Wisconsin-Madison clearly showed that FC was simply a tragic farce. My findings were totally ignored. The full account of this matter will be discussed in detail in my next book, *A Magician in the Laboratory*.

The "facilitated communication" process consists of the "facilitator" actually holding the hand of the subject over the keyboard, moving the hand to the key, then drawing the hand back from the keyboard! This very intimate participatory action lends itself very easily to transferring the intended information to the computer screen. In the video you have just viewed, it is very evident that (a) the "facilitator" is looking *directly* at the keyboard and the screen, and (b) is moving the subject's hand. The video editing is also biased, giving angles that line up the head of the subject with the screen, as if the subject were watching the screen.

This man in the msnbc.com (<http://msnbc.com/>) piece is not seeing the screen. He is not aware of what is going on. He is an unknowing victim of these charlatans. A simple test - such as that done on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1993, in a Frontline (PBS) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontline\\_%28PBS\\_TV\\_series%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontline_%28PBS_TV_series%29)) documentary highlighting these concerns, "Prisoners of Silence," (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/programs/transcripts/1202.html>) would prove that FC is a total fraud. This powerful and comprehensive program *proved* that FC was a delusion.

Dr. Snyderman, how did this get by you? The evidence is right there on the screen! Others have solved this fraud. The *Association for Behavior Analysis International* (ABAI), the *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, and the *American Association on Mental Retardation*, have no doubts about this. ABAI calls FC a "discredited technique" and warns that "its use is unwarranted and unethical." The *Association for Science in Autism Treatment* reviewed the research and position statements and concluded that the messages typed were controlled *by the facilitator*, not by the individual with autism, and that FC did not improve language skills.

We critics of FC question why people can apparently give speeches in public - via a keyboard and a "facilitator" - and go to college - similarly "assisted" - *yet they cannot answer a series of simple questions under controlled conditions!* Psychologist Daniel Wegner ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel\\_Wegner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Wegner)), professor of psychology at Harvard University and a fellow of the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Association\\_for\\_the\\_Advancement\\_of\\_Science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Association_for_the_Advancement_of_Science)) has stated that facilitated communication is a striking example of the ideomotor effect ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ideomotor\\_effect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ideomotor_effect)), and tests of FC show that it is a complete fraud, farce, and delusion!

Please, Dr. Snyderman, may we hear from you, in light of what appears here?

◀ [Prev \(/site/index.php/swift-blog/785-terrorists-at-the-mall.html\)](/site/index.php/swift-blog/785-terrorists-at-the-mall.html)

[Next ▶ \(/site/index.php/swift-blog/782-thanks-favors-news.html\)](/site/index.php/swift-blog/782-thanks-favors-news.html)

## Main Menu

[Home \(/site/index.php\)](/site/index.php)

This is the archived site - [Click here for the new site \(http://web.randi.org\)](http://web.randi.org)

[Swift Blog Biographies \(/site/index.php/swift-blog/swift-blog-biographies.html\)](/site/index.php/swift-blog/swift-blog-biographies.html)

