



Multiple Sclerosis Society
Northern Ireland

Foyle Branch FOCUS

Member Support & Services



Spring/Summer 2006

MS SOCIETY CAMPAIGN REDUCES WAITING LISTS



Health Minister, Shaun Woodward, MP announced that waiting lists for drugs to treat Multiple Sclerosis will be eliminated by March 2008.

The announcement came at his Press Conference in the MS Society, Resource Centre on Tuesday 7th February 2006.

Over 100 people attended the Press Conference, organised by the MS Society, to hear the Minister deliver his very positive news.

Kieran Harris, Director of the MS Society, NI said,

“We have been campaigning for over four years now to ensure that people with MS do not have to go on lengthy waiting lists, in some cases for up to two years, before commencing treatment and we are delighted that today our campaigning work on this issue has brought success.”

He added, “Today’s announcement means that never again should anyone with MS, and prescribed for treatment, find themselves having to face the previously totally unacceptable waiting times to receive treatment.”

Mr Harris congratulated and welcomed the Minister’s initiative and confirmed that the MS

Cliona Curran and Shauna Hutton met the Minister and emphasised the importance of an early diagnosis and the availability of Disease Modifying Therapies.

The Health Minister, Shaun Woodward, is welcomed by Kieran Harris at the MS Society Resource Centre in Belfast. The Minister announced that extra funding is to be made available over the next two years to eliminate the waiting list for Disease Modifying Therapies.

Society will continue to take a leading role in ensuring that people affected by MS receive the best quality treatments available.

The MS Society is indebted to the many thousands of people who supported their campaign over the past four years and singled out the All Party Political Group on MS whose advice and support has been invaluable.

For further information contact Terry on (028) 7136 0831.

Multiple Sclerosis Society

FOYLE BRANCH

Annual General Meeting

FOYLE DISABILITY
RESOURCE CENTRE

Tuesday 16th May 2006

at 3.00pm

Guest Speaker - Robert McConnell
Community Support Officer



BRANCH SERVICES

The Foyle Branch of the MS Society delivers a range of services providing help and support to people living with and affected by MS, whilst funding research for hope in the future. Information and advice is available Monday to Friday from the Foyle Branch office, 58 Strand Road - Tel 7136 0831.

The MS Society Foyle Branch provide a range of services including: Physiotherapy exercise sessions, Yoga, Tai Chi/Qi Gong, Tuesday Club, Thursday Support Group, Accessible Transport, Library, Local and National Magazines.

For information on any of our services please telephone the MS Society Foyle Branch office on 7136 0831, e-mail: msfoyle@tiscali.co.uk or visit our website at www.msfoyle.freeserve.co.uk

~ CLAUDY DOES YOGA ~

Do you live in or near to the Claudy area?

The Foyle Branch is running Yoga for people with MS in the Diamond Centre every Friday 10.00 to 11.00am. To participate come along to the Diamond Centre on a Friday morning or for further information contact Terry on 71360831.



Claudy participants relax with a cup of tea after their Yoga session.

Who's Who

Development Officer: Terry McNamee

Tel: (028) 7136 0831

Welfare: Moira Leitch

Tel: (028) 7126 7400

Chairperson: Peter Eakin

Tel: (028) 7133 8641

Vice-Chair: Michael Heverin

Tel: (028) 7126 1118

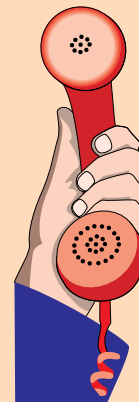
Secretary: Marie McGinn

Tel: (028) 7186 0152

Treasurer: Damien McKenna

Tel: (028) 7136 3921

(MS Society Charity No: 207 495)



GETTING TO KNOW YOU!

Marie McGinn

Marie is currently Secretary of Foyle Branch. Marie and husband Raymond have been married for 35 years and have a daughter, Deborah and a grandson, Peter.



Happiest childhood memory?

Going to my Aunt's in Carlow for my holidays.

Human quality you most admire?

Truthfulness and sincerity.

Human quality you least admire? *Bigotry.*

Favourite book? *Jane Eyre - greatest love story.*

Favourite film?

Sphinx - anything to do with Egypt.

Favourite television programme?

CSI Miami - Brilliant.

Favourite food/drink?

Love my meat and two veg. Water.

Favourite holiday destination? *Westport - love Ireland's west coast.*

What is your greatest fear? *Spiders - I'm cringing just writing the word.*

You've won the lottery, what would you do?

Divide it among the family and maybe give Foyle Branch a fiver.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who left you with a smile.

The MS Society Foyle Branch ANNUAL QUIZ

will be held in the Waterfoot Hotel on Thursday 18th May 2006 at 7.30pm. Get your friends, make up a team and come along for a good night's craic.

RESEARCH

Pregnancy - does having MS affect pregnancy and birth?

Title: Pregnancy, delivery, and birth outcome in women with multiple sclerosis.

Authors: J Dahl, KM Myhr, AK Daltveit, JM Hoff, NE Gilhus. Place of Report: Norway.

Journal Reference: Neurology, 2005. Vol. 65, pages 1961-1963.

Research Summary

Women with MS are often concerned about the risks associated with pregnancy and birth. It is well documented that many women often feel well during pregnancy but experience a relapse shortly after giving birth.

A study in Norway investigated whether MS in women affects pregnancy, the delivery or birth outcome of the baby. Since 1967, people in Norway have had to register all births with the Medical Birth Registry of Norway with full details on the mother, the baby at 16 weeks old in the womb, the pregnancy and delivery. This study included all 2.1 million births from the beginning of 1967 until the end of 2002. During this period, 461 women diagnosed with MS gave birth to 649 babies. There were 2.1 million births from 1 million mothers not affected with MS.

The study showed that mothers with MS had an increased rate of the baby being small for their age. The women with MS in this study did not show an increased rate for other conditions known to decrease birth weight. Studies in people with MS have shown that they have sufficient nutrients in their diet and therefore the reduced birth weight of babies in this population is unlikely to be due to diet. Bowel, bladder and sexual dysfunction are frequent problems in MS and changes in the way nerves work in the pelvic organs may influence the way the baby develops.

Women with MS have an increased need for labour to be induced and often have a slow labour. There is also an increased need for intervention (the use of forceps) during birth for women with MS, and there are increased numbers of planned caesarean deliveries. MS related symptoms such as muscle weakness, spasticity and fatigue may be factors which may explain the need for intervention during delivery.

This study has shown that mothers with MS have smaller babies and are more likely to require interventions in labour and delivery.

Key messages

- Women with MS are often concerned about the risks of having children.
- In a study in Norway, babies born to women with MS were smaller than those born to women without MS.
- Women with MS had an increased need for labour to be induced and an increased need for intervention (forceps or caesarean delivery).

• STEM CELL THERAPY? •

Title: Banking on human embryonic stem cells; estimating the number of donor cell lines needed for HLA matching.

Authors: CJ Taylor, EM Bolton, S Pocock, LD Sharpies, RA Pedersen, JA Bradley. Place of Report: Cambridge, UK. Journal Reference: The Lancet, 2005. Vol. 366, pages 2019-2025.

Research Summary

Stem cells are 'unspecialised' cells that have the potential to develop into almost any cell in the human body, including cells in the immune system and central nervous system. Stem cells are found in both embryos and adults. However, adult stem cells can not develop into all types of cells whereas stem cells from embryos can form any cell type. Most embryonic stem cells used in research come from embryos not used in fertility treatments.

Stem cells can turn into many different types of cell. These cells can divide to create new stem cells or become another type of cell with a more specialised function. Consequently, stem cells may have the potential to replace disease or damaged tissues in a wide range of conditions, including the brain and spinal cord in MS. Further research is required into the possibilities of stem cells as a therapy.

It may be possible to produce a stock of stem cells (a cell line) that could grow indefinitely in the laboratory and produce enough cells for transplantation. Cells in the body have markers (antigens) on the outside and it is important to match the type of antigen on the stem cells or tissues for transplantation to the person that is receiving the transplant. The blood group antigens (A, B and O) and human leukocyte antigens (HLAs) are markers that need to be matched between the donor cells and recipient in order to avoid rejection by the recipient. It

is essential that the blood group antigens are a correct match, but only a best match for the HLAs is required. The body's immune (defence) system recognises these markers on cells and will destroy the cells if they see them as foreign to the body.

This study investigated many types of stem cell lines would be required to produce a stock of cells with enough combinations of markers to enable donor/recipient matching in most cases. The study determined that a cell bank containing stem cell lines from approximately 150 donors would be required to achieve this. The findings from this study have practical, political and ethical implications for the establishment of a human embryonic stem cell bank.

Key messages

- Stem cells are unspecialised cells that can make any type of cell.
- There are two types of stem cell-embryonic and adult.
- All cell types have identifying antigens (markers) on them for other cells to recognise.
- ABO blood group and human leukocyte antigens (HLAs) are markers that need to be matched between the donor cells and recipient in order to avoid rejection.
- A cell bank containing stem cell lines from approximately 150 donors would provide enough combinations of markers to enable donor/recipient matching.

• CONFERENCE TIME •

The MS Society NI will hold a conference in the Tower Hotel this year from the 13th-15th October. The conference will include a day for Healthcare professionals on Friday 13th. The MS Society's A.G.M. will be held on Saturday 14th with a guest speaker followed by an open forum. Saturday evening will include dinner and music with an Awards Ceremony for Branch volunteers.

The Pritchard Lecture will be on Sunday 15th and will be delivered by Professor Michael Hutchinson from St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin. There are special rates for people wishing to stay overnight on Saturday to attend both Saturday and Sunday's events. This includes accessible accommodation, but remember, booking early is strongly advised.

Prices:	MS Society member:	£47.50
	Non-member:	£67.50

For further information on daily delegate rates, contact Samantha or Robert on (028) 9080 2802

THE MS HELPLINE

The MS Helpline is there to help all people affected by MS. You may have been recently diagnosed, have lived with the condition for many years, or maybe you are a carer, relation or friend, the help line is often the first point of contact for emotional support and information.

The MS Helpline deals with all manner of enquiries, information or details about issues in the media, as well as complex research questions. Helpline officers also receive calls from people who are having emotional problems in dealing with their, or a loved one's, MS. The Helpline service is completely confidential; no records identifying callers are kept by the MS Society. Most importantly, the helpline number will not show up on your telephone bill should you need to call.

The Helpline is free to call from landlines and from certain mobile networks, So far Orange, Vodafone, T-mobile, Three and Virgin are signed up to the free to call scheme with others surely to follow.

MS Helpline 0808 800 8000



Three students undertaking a Bsc Hons Degree in Business Studies with Marketing as a specialism at the University of Ulster are, through the Science Shop, completing a research project for MS Society Foyle looking at awareness of the services provided by the Foyle Branch. Nicola, Kirsty and Ciara were photographed in the Foyle Branch office. Our congratulations to Ciara who had a baby daughter on the 5th April. Mother and baby are doing very well!