



ENERGY SAVING GRANT INFORMATION

The Energy Saving Trust advice centre offers free comprehensive advice and support on energy efficiency, renewable energy technology and low carbon transport, helping you to save money and the environment.

The Energy Saving Trust advice centre provides support on energy efficiency through the provision of a range of energy saving grant schemes, cash backs and discounts that are available to all householders and private tenants in Northern Ireland.

Did you know we offer grant schemes and cash backs for cavity wall and loft insulation, heating controls, appliance trade in and low energy lighting and that by making your home more energy efficient could save you up to £250 a year on your household energy bills?

The Heating Controls Cash back Scheme offer is aimed at owner-occupied properties with oil, gas and LPG heating systems to encourage them to upgrade their heating controls through the provision of a £200 cash back incentive.

The Insulation Plus Scheme offers up to £150 cash-back on the insulation of cavity wall insulation and £150 cash back on loft insulation to encourage the insulation of cavity walls and/or loft insulation. Around 50% of the heat lost in your home is through the walls and roof, so insulating them can be the most cost effective way to save energy in the home. The cash back is funded by Northern Ireland Electricity and Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

For more information on how to apply for a grant and for more information about the range of other grants you may be entitled to, give our expert advisors a call on free phone 0800 512 012, email us on ni.advice@est.org.uk or log on to www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/northernireland.



*The Foyle Branch wishes
all its members
a very Happy Christmas
and a Peaceful New Year*

Peter



Some photos from the Foyle Branch's recent Christmas Dinner - a great night was had by all!

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.org.uk

Pictured right is Mark Gamble who recently presented the Society with a cheque for £720. Mark and his mother, Jacqueline organised a Raffle for which Jacqueline knitted a lot of the prizes to help raise this marvellous total.



Michael Henry and Paul Canning present a £500 cheque to Terry after completing the Waterside half marathon. This is the second year that Michael and friends have completed gruelling runs to raise money for the Foyle Branch which is much appreciated.

Who's Who

Development Officer: Terry McNamee

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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

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Treasurer: Damien McKenna

Tel: (028) 7136 3921

(MS Society Charity No: 207 495)



CHARITY PICS



Sandra Robinson's sponsored walk from the Inn at the Cross to Claudy followed by a dance in the Beaufort Hotel was again very successful this year. Sandra raised £2,565.60 which will be split between MS Foyle and Friends of Spruce House. Sandra was determined not to let her MS stop her participation in the Claudy walk. Thanks to Shopmobility for their assistance.



Cell transplant hope for blood diseases

Thousands of patients with ailments such as multiple sclerosis and sickle cell disease have been given new hope that cell transplants could offer a more effective way to treat them.

An important step towards the goal of transplanting the parent stem cells that give rise to red blood cells to treat genetic blood diseases, such as sickle cell disease, is reported by an American team.

Using the same method, it should be possible to treat a person with an autoimmune disease, such as multiple sclerosis, in which immune cells attack the person's own body.

An immune system transplant, much like a liver, kidney or heart transplant, would give the person a different set of white blood cells that might not attack the body, offering an effective treatment.

Bone marrow transplants are already used to, in effect, transplant stem cells that make healthy white and red blood cells from one person to another but it is necessary to wipe out the old bone marrow first with radiation, which damages other tissue and can cause lasting effects including infertility, brain damage and an increased risk of cancer.

Now an elegant and more efficient way to achieve the same result, by focusing only on the stem cells of the body's blood and immune system, is reported in the journal *Science* by researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine, California.

The team has found a way to transplant new blood-forming stem cells from a donor into the bone marrow of mice, effectively replacing their immune systems.

Many aspects of the technique would need to be adapted before it can be tested in humans, said lead author Prof Irving Weissman but, when surmounted, the benefits are potentially huge, he said.

To avoid the need to wipe out bone marrow, Prof Weissman, Dr Deepta Bhattacharya and Agnieszka Czechowicz found a way to eliminate only the blood-forming stem cells without affecting bone marrow cells or other tissues, using a toxin that only sticks to blood-forming stem cells, effectively destroying the cells, so implanted



cells can take hold.

"It is essentially a surgical strike against the blood-forming stem cells," says Prof Weissman. When the team transplanted new blood-forming stem cells into the mice, those cells took up residence in the bone marrow and established a new blood and immune system.

In this way, stem cells can be taken from one person who has a good tissue match and these donor cells implanted into a person with autoimmune disease, such as multiple sclerosis, so that the new immune system would likely no longer attack the nerves of the body. Likewise, in people with a genetic blood disorder such as sickle cell anaemia, the new blood system would not have the genetic mutation, eliminating the cause of disease.

First, the researchers have to develop a way to carry out the same kind of surgical strike on human blood forming cells. They also need to do more animal testing to check the effects of the immune system. Although these steps will take time, Prof Weissman says he considered this work to be the beginning of research that could lead to human studies.

Dr Laura Bell, research communications officer at the MS Society, comments: "Stem cell studies are an important avenue of research which hold promise in terms of treatments for MS. This early stage study is interesting and we look forward to seeing how the work translates into studies in people with MS."

"For those whose blood stem cells contain a severe genetic defect such as that causing sickle cell anaemia, replacing them with normal stem cells would enable restoration of normal blood,"

comments Prof Edward Tuddenham of Royal Free Hospital, London.

"Bone marrow transplantation has been used for sickle cell anaemia with good results in children, but in adults it is difficult to get the new stem cells to take in the face of rejection by the resident stem cells and their progeny- the immune system."

"This study is clearly interesting and has great potential. It will clearly be needed to see whether these finding in mice can be translated into benefit for patients," adds Prof Lars Fugger of the Medical Research Council Human Immunology Unit and Department of Clinical Neurology, Oxford University.

RESEARCH

My name is Guio Garcia and I am a qualified physiotherapist. I am part of a research team which is doing a study on fatigue in MS and its treatment. Our research team is based in the University of Ulster and is formed by Dr Sheila Lennon (senior lecturer in physiotherapy), Dr Andrea Lowe-Strong (senior lecturer in the school of health sciences), Dr Sam Murphy (lecturer in the school of psychology) and myself. We are working in collaboration with Dr Hawkins, Dr McDonnell and Dr Droogan, neurology consultants.

We are currently looking for people who would like to take part in our study and I would be very interested in meeting members of Foyle Branch to explain this piece of research and to encourage people to participate. In the meantime if you are interested please contact Terry McNamee on 7136 0831 or myself at:

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Marie's Story



I've been living with MS for thirty-something years now. Although I'm in a wheelchair I haven't 'sat down' since. From the beginning I knew it was either lie down and soak up the sympathy, or get on with things and enjoy life.

I had a new baby and was diagnosed shortly after the birth. I also had a lovely husband whom I loved dearly, so I, or rather we, struggled together, and got through those bad times of coming to terms with this horrible disease. As if matters weren't bad enough, my husband took ill. Then it was a matter of role reversal. I was now looking after him and didn't have much time to think about myself. It was during this time that I first went into a wheelchair, but fate can work in weird ways. As I was visiting Raymond in hospital twice a day and once a day when he was in the Royal Hospital in Belfast, my walking was getting quite difficult and of course the 'chair was handy. The strange thing was, I didn't feel self-conscious about it as Raymond was so ill and I'd no time to think about myself.

Well, we got through all this, raised our daughter and now have a lovely grandson, so Raymond and I came out the other side still happily married. We still have days in which Raymond would not be too good and I sometimes would feel tired, but another day dawns and we just get on with things ...together... Life goes on and it's up to the individual what to do with it. You can either be miserable or happy. Personally, I'd rather be happy.

Important Changes to Disability Discrimination Act - MS included from Diagnosis

The definition of disability has been amended so that people with cancer, multiple sclerosis or HIV are, from 31 October 2007, covered from the point of diagnosis rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Further information is available on the MS Foyle Branch website at: www.msfoyle.org.uk and on the Equality Commission site at: www.youarenowcovered.org