

Warrington

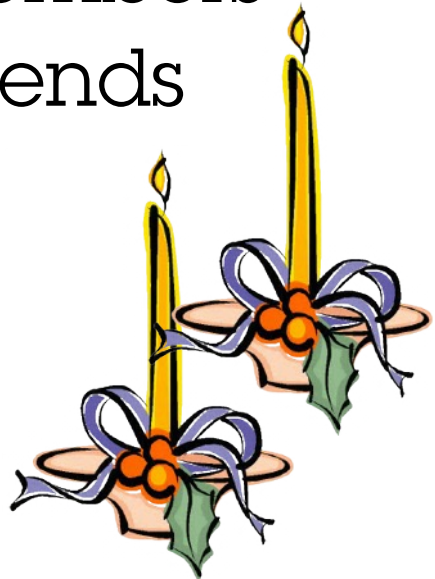
# MIScellany

December 2011

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## Seasons Greetings

To all members  
and friends



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Sam King, 45 Denbury Avenue, Stockton Heath. WA4 2BW Tel 860630

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## Membership News

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Sorry that there is no editorial this time as Sam has been unable to get it done but I'm sure you will be able to wait until the end of January for the next newsletter.

Since our last newsletter there has been one death Olive Dean died in September but we were only made aware of this on reading the report of her funeral in the Warrington Guardian.

On pages 9 & 10 is a report of a discovery using embryonic stem cells, although it does seem heavy for non-medical people and it's some distance from being available as a treatment I thought it worth including just to show the amount of research that goes on into MS.

Five pounds yearly subscription to the MS Society is now due don't delay getting it to Peter Travers or if you must headquarters. Whilst on the subject of membership our Annual Meeting next year is being changed from March until April 10th in a hope that the weather will be kinder and more might attend. There will be more news about this in the New Year.

All that remains is for me wish and hope you have a Merry Christmas and that 2012 is kind to us all.

Chris Janovitz

## — Brainteasers —

1. Johnny's mother had three children. The first was named April, the second was named May. What was the first child's name?
2. There is an assistant at the butchers shop, he is 5'10" tall and he wears size 13 trainers. What does he weigh?
3. Before Mount Everest was discovered what was the tallest mountain?
4. How much earth is there in a hole that measures 2 ft by 3' x 4'?
5. What word in the English language is all spelt incorrectly?

*Answers to the above on page 4.*

**MS Helpline Freephone  
0808 800 8000**



*Our congratulations to:-*

Graham BANKS	05.Dec
Liz SPENSLEY	08.Dec
Chris JANOVITZ	13.Dec
Stephanie ATHERTON	16.Dec
Mary BURKE	18.Dec
Jill SHERRATT	19.Dec
Margaret HUGHES	17.Jan
James WILDE	21.Jan
Jennifer CAIN	06.Feb
Karen DANIELS	06.Feb

Apologies to Lee Gorman whose birthday on 23rd of November was not included in the last newsletter.

### — Forthcoming Events —

**No Social in January**

14th February

Social St Josephs Club Penketh 7:30 pm

Requests for transport - Jeff Richards 07738609018

Listening Ear - Margret Hughes - 01925 723917

## Government in U-turn

Thanks to your campaigning over the past year, the government announced today that they have scrapped their policy to take the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) away from those living in state-funded, residential care homes.

This U-turn is great news for thousands of people with MS and shows that the government has finally acted on your concerns. We've joined thousands of disabled people and the organisations who represent them in opposing this proposal from the start.

Along with many campaigners we submitted evidence to the Low Review, which put the final nail in the coffin of the proposed policy, highlighting how vital the benefit is to maintaining the independence of those in residential care.

While this a fantastic victory for disabled people, the fight for a fair benefits system continues. A number of very worrying proposals remain in the Welfare Reform Bill that we believe will hit disabled people hard.

In particular, we want to ensure that Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) isn't time-limited for some claimants and that the benefit to replace DLA – Personal Independence Payment – continues to provide disabled people with the financial support they need for as long as they need it.

You can help us in the continued battle as the Bill progresses through Parliament. As part of the Hardest Hit campaign, we're sending a Christmas message to David Cameron and Nick Clegg asking them for change to give disabled people a new year to look forward to.

Please visit the MS Society website campaigns page to send your message.

## Answers to Brainteasers

1. Johnny of course, 2. Meat, 3. Mount Everest it just wasn't discovered yet, 4. There is no earth in a hole, 5. Incorrectly.

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## MS Tablet Still Refused

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The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence said on Thursday it still believed the medicine was not cost effective, compared with other existing treatments.

Gilenya, licensed in Europe in March, represents a significant change in multiple sclerosis (MS) treatment, since existing drugs, such as beta interferons and Elan and Biogen Idec's Tysabri, must be injected.

In bid to win over NICE after an initial rebuff in August, Novartis had offered a discount or so-called "patient access scheme" for Gilenya to the National Health Service (NHS). "Our independent committee has not been convinced that it is a cost effective treatment option for the NHS, even with the proposed patient access scheme," NICE Chief Executive Andrew Dillon said in a statement.

The size of the discount offered by Novartis is being kept confidential. A Novartis spokesman declined to say whether it would bring the cost of Gilenya down to that of Tysabri.

Based on current list prices, NICE said the annual cost of Gilenya was £19,196 per person, compared with £14,730 for Tysabri. The latest draft guidance from the agency is now open for comment until January 5 and final guidance is expected to be issued in April 2012.

Despite the fresh rejection, Novartis said it believed Gilenya was "a highly efficacious and cost-effective treatment," adding it was committed to engaging with NICE to make sure patients in Britain got access to the medicine.

Gilenya's convenient dosing and encouraging results in clinical trials are widely expected to make it a popular alternative to current injections. The average forecast from analysts suggests annual global sales will reach £1.5 billion by 2015, according to Thomson Reuters Pharma.

The Novartis drug is the first MS pill of its kind, but other competitors in development include BG-12 from Biogen, Aubagio from Sanofi and laquinimod from Teva Pharmaceutical Industries.

## ————— Research Link Between Saffron And MS —————

**M**edical researchers at the University of Alberta have discovered that an active ingredient in the Persian spice saffron may be a potential treatment for diseases involving neuroinflammation, such as multiple sclerosis.

Chris Power and a team of researchers in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry recently published their findings in the peer-reviewed publication, *The Journal of Immunology*.

"We found there is a compound in saffron, known as crocin, that exerts a protective effect in brain cell cultures and other models of MS. It prevented damage to cells that make myelin in the brain," Power said. "Myelin is insulation around nerves. MS is characterized by inflamed brain cells that have lost this protective insulation, which ultimately leads to neurodegeneration."

Power noted they are not close to a clinical trial stage yet, but the finding is still exciting. It has been known in the research community for years that crocin protected neurons in certain situations, but Power and his team wanted to delve further into this area.

His team discovered that inflammation and a specific type of cell stress are closely linked and lead to neurodegeneration and inflammation which cause cells to lose their protective coating - a process known as demyelination. In experiments conducted by Power and his colleagues, the use of crocin suppressed both inflammation and this specific type of cell stress, resulting in decreased neurological impairment in lab models and cell cultures with MS.

"There are still many questions to be answered about how crocin exerts these neuroprotective effects, but this research highlights a potential treatment role for crocin in diseases involving chronic neuroinflammation - something that had not been recognized until now," says Power.

He explained the research demonstrates a new mechanism in MS, provides new potential drug targets in the future, and helps explain why physicians see inflammation in MS.

The team's research also revealed that this specific type of cell stress, called the unfolded protein response, may be caused by an ancient virus that was introduced into the DNA of early humans. This particular cell stress is found at high levels in MS brain lesions.

"We all have this ancient virus in our DNA, but for some reason it is excessively turned on in MS," says Power. "We are doing more research investigating this link."

Power has been investigating this specific area for six to seven years.

*The Times India and Journal of Immunology.*



## 100+Club



There are 105 members if you're not one of them please consider joining contact Chris Janovitz on 723564. Remember the more people join the higher the prizes go don't delay.

11 October 2011  
Members 106

Prize	Num	Name
1st	014	John McQuillan
2nd	108	Pam Lilford
3rd	039	C R Berry
4th	113	G Lilford
	095	Val Stock
	059	Susan Atkinson
	020	Mary Burke
	072	Francis Mulcahy

The amounts were £106.00, £56.00, £31.00 and 5 at £10 respectively

8 November 2011  
Members 105

Prize	Num	Name
1st	018	Peter Travers
2nd	021	Kenneth Harrison
3rd	045	Julie Richards
4th	077	C McCann
	032	Anne Patterson
	023	Christine Secker
	019	Liz Spensley
	096	Carol Hill

The amounts were £102.00, £52.00, £30.00 and 5 at £10 respectively

## — Benefits assessment set to improve? —

A report reviewing the assessment process for Employment Support Allowance has been published this week (24/11) Professor Harrington, who is leading the review, is positive that recommendations to improve the process have been, or will be in the near future, implemented – but also stated there is more work to be done.

Some of the recommendations include:

- continued monitoring of the system to see if recommendations are really being implemented
- unannounced visits to Benefits Delivery Centres and Atos Assessment Centres
- regular audits of the performance of decision makers
- more research into what happens to people who are found fit for work and people placed in the Work Related Activity Group
- more regular publication of data on the performance and quality of Atos

The Society has been leading a review of how the work capability assessment can be made more suitable for people with fluctuating conditions. Some of our recommendations to Harrington include:

- the test needs to take into account the frequency, severity and duration of symptoms
- activities in the test must be able to be completed 'reliably, repeatedly and safely'
- there should be more work related activities in the descriptors
- better recognition for how pain and **fatigue** could impact on a person's ability to work.

This week's report confirmed that these recommendations will be considered and possibly tested – to see how far they improve the assessment.

Simon Gillespie, co-chair of the fluctuating conditions review group, said: "As charities supporting people with fluctuating conditions,



## MS Nurse Clinic

From Walton Centre

**Helen Leggett**

0151 525 3611

Woolston Clinic

2nd Monday of the month  
2 PM

we've heard from thousands of incredibly frustrated people who've told us that the work capability assessment is completely flawed.

We're therefore pleased that our concerns have been recognized and that improvements could be implemented soon; for many people trying to rightly claim benefits now, positive change cannot come soon enough."



## Unwanted Clothes and Shoes

Curtains Blankets Bags and Belts

As a branch we are now recycling and can turn your unwanted items into branch funds

Must be clean and dry

Contact Peter Travers tel. 492970

## Cash Raised

Since the start of our recycling group over £200 has been added to branch funds. Thanks to all who have taken part and keep up the good work.

Peter

## Outings & Events

Support Your Branch

Monthly Socials



## Embryonic Stem Cells

Researchers have now understood how the right mix of biological growth factors coaxes human embryonic stem cells (ESCs) to form oligodendrocytes, a type of nerve cells that form the myelin sheath.

"We have been able to identify the proteins that are expressed during the differentiation of ESCs into oligodendrocyte progenitor cells, which in turn grow into oligodendrocytes," says Akhilesh Pandey, one of the researchers from the Institute of Bioinformatics, Bangalore and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, US. "We have also identified several proteins that aid the formation of myelin," he adds.

Oligodendrocytes (OLs) are specialized cells that wrap tightly around axons to form the myelin sheath. The job of these support cells is to speed up the electrical signal that travels down an axon. Without oligodendrocytes an action potential would travel down an axon 30 times slower. Injury to OLs seems to initiate multiple sclerosis. Studies have also shown that OL injury has a role to play in schizophrenia.

The best way to treat such disorders is to replace the worn-out OLs. To achieve this, studies have tried to grow OLs in lab. Oligodendrocyte progenitor cells (OPCs) have been grown from human ESCs in animals with spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis. Lab studies have discovered a number of growth factors, which promote OPC migration, survival and proliferation. Despite identifying factors that affect OPC proliferation and differentiation, researchers knew little about the factors that trigger myelin-forming OLs.

To zero in on proteins specific to OL differentiation, the researchers grew human ESCs in a nutrient broth laced with various growth factors. They observed the proliferation and differentiation of ESCs into embryoid bodies, neural progenitor cells (NPCs), glial progenitor cells (GPCs) and OPCs which could finally grow into OLs and form myelin. At every stage of cell differentiation, the researchers harvested cells and identified stage-specific proteins using state-of-the-art mass spectrometry analysis.

The study identified 3145 proteins at key stages of OL differentiation from human ESCs. Some of the vital proteins at the OPC stage were neural cell adhesion molecule 1 (NCAM1), APOE, tenascin C (TNC), vimentin (VIM), wingless-related MMTV integration site 5A (WNT5A), and heat shock 27 kDa protein 1.

"Further exploration of these proteins within the OL lineage is likely to yield novel therapies for diagnosing and treating many OL-associated or demyelinating conditions," Pandey says.

The study also found novel markers for NPCs and GPCs which would add to the repertoire of specific markers increasing specificity. The NPCs can differentiate in neural and glial cells. "The multiple markers will aid in selection of pure cells, which is currently a limiting factor", Pandey adds.

There is no single specific marker for a stem cell. "The study affords a group of protein markers for the identification of a cell type. Such identification will provide valuable clues for future studies about the pathways involved in the transformation of the ESCs into progenitor cells," says Sumantra Das who studies neurobiochemistry and neuropharmacology at Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata.

Though the study identifies molecular markers in a single shot, the question is how far the information is valuable since artificial progenitor cells generated may not be phenotypically similar to a primary progenitor cell isolated from the brain, Das says.

The authors of this study are from: *Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore and University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA; Amrita School of Biotechnology, Amrita Viswa Vidyapeetham, Kollam, Kerala and Manipal University, India; Thermo Fisher Scientific (Bremen) GmbH, Bremen, Germany*

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<http://warringtonms.org.uk>  
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# Executive Committee April 2011

## Branch Officers

Chair	Mr Paul Harrison.....	01606 892151
Secretary	Mrs Elaine Magill.....	637120
Treasurer	Mr John Burke .....	824041
Support Officer	Mrs Dorothy Lewis.....	268820

## Committee Members

Fundraising	Mrs Julie Richards.....	573980
Joint Equipment/ Transport	Mr Jim O'Connor.....	451472
Web/DTP	Mr Jeff Richards.....	07738609018
Social	Mr Chris Janovitz.....	723564
Everybody's Help Activities	Mrs Rita Harrison.....	01606 892151
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Subscriptions	Mrs Margaret Wilmot.....	755017
Everybody's Help Activities	Mr Sam King.....	860630
Activities/fundraising	Mr Peter Travers.....	492970
	Mrs Mary Burke.....	824041
	Charles Dooley.....	860112
	Amanda Wilton.....	726758
	Julia Wilton .....	726758

**T**his newsletter is published by The Warrington and District branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society. We give regular updates about MS and what is happening locally in the MS community.

Editor: Sam King  
Layout Chris Janovitz

All views expressed in the publication are individual and not necessarily the view or policy of the charity and its supporters.

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