Research Reporter

Welcome to the July 2023 edition to our guide to what's new in MS science

Research Round up

April: Trial shows no effect of high dose vitamin D in relapsing remitting MS

A clinical trial in the US tested whether a high dose of vitamin D could help treat people with relapsing remitting MS. 172 people with relapsing remitting MS either received a low or high daily dose of vitamin D.

When comparing the low and high dose of vitamin D the results showed there was:

- No difference in the number of people who had relapses
- No difference in the number of lesions or brain shrinkage on MRI scans.

But our bodies do need Vitamin D to help absorb different nutrients. It's produced in our skin in response to sunlight. And because of the UK's climate, the NHS recommends everyone living here takes a daily vitamin D supplement to support bone health.

May: Study explores whether depression could increase risk of MS progression

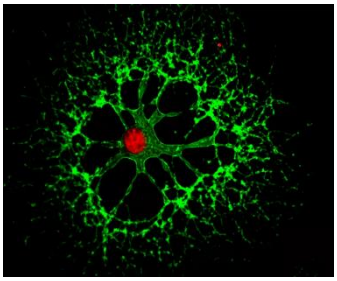
MS REGISTER

A study using information from the UK MS Register published suggests depression may be a result of more advanced disability, rather than a cause. The researchers found what appeared to be a link between early depression and going on to reach a higher level of disability. But this link disappeared when they took into account people's earlier level of disability.

So rather than depression impacting disability worsening, they suggest their results are likely to be showing the big challenges of living with MS. Greater disability can cause people to feel more depressed. But the researchers do acknowledge there could be other explanations for their results. For example, there could be a common factor increasing the risk of both disability and depression, such as more brain lesions.

June: Researchers seeking ways to improve myelin repair

Two teams at the MS Society Edinburgh Centre for MS Research shared their results which could lead towards new approaches for myelin repair research.



- Professor Anna Williams and her team found cells in the spinal cord make myelin in a slightly different way to cells in the brain. If myelin-making cells behave differently in different parts of the body, some drugs might be more effective for some cells than for others.

- Professor Veronique Miron and her team found another brain cell called astrocytes keep myelin-making cells alive by giving them cholesterol. By boosting the cholesterol-giving properties of astrocytes, it improved myelin repair.

Meet the Researcher

Professor Klaus Schmierer leads research into treatments during the diagnostic phase all the way through to advanced MS. We spoke to Klaus to find out why it's important for people with MS to be given the choice of disease modifying therapy at every stage of their journey. He told us about two clinical trials he's involved with, AttackMS and ChariotMS.

He says, "I hope ChariotMS, AttackMS, and other trials, will lead to ever more effective DMT throughout the course of MS, to maintain and improve quality of life for all."

StopMS Annual Lecture

In May, this year's lecture was given by Professor Helen Ford: 'Transforming trials for progressive MS: technology, talent…and tentacles'. She shared updates for some of the clinical trials we fund: MS-STAT2, ChariotMS and Octopus.

Afterwards, audience members asked questions of our Scientific Ambassadors. All four panel members had a different answer for 'If we do this lecture in ten years' time, what do you think the topic will be?'

Want to catch up on the lecture, and find out their answers? You can watch it on YouTube.

Following the trial trail

ChariotMS

ChariotMS is testing whether a drug called cladribine can slow down the worsening of hand and arm function for people with more advanced MS. It has no upper age limit. There's now 20 trial sites open across the UK, including Belfast, Sheffield, Cardiff, Glasgow and London. You can find out more on the ChariotMS website.

Together with the trial team, we've been hosting ChariotMS community events where you can hear updates and have a live Q&A with researchers. Keep an eye on our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for the next one!

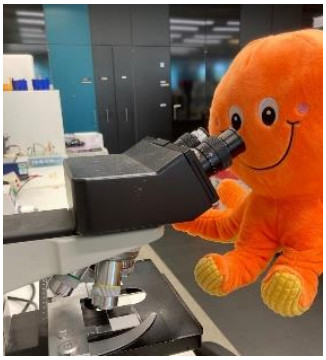
Octopus

Octopus is our revolutionary mega-trial. Now, recruitment has started in London, Edinburgh and Southampton. You can look at the Octopus website to see locations of sites. Some sites are open to recruitment, some are working on set up and some have expressed an interest but not started set up.

If you're interested in taking part in Octopus, you can register your interest through the UK MS Register. When you register, you'll be asked where you live. This is so the closest trial sites can contact you when they start recruiting. For most people, this won't happen for quite a while. Trial sites are still getting set up and over 1700 people have already registered their interest.

And finally…

There's still time to send your suggestions for naming our friend the Octopus through this survey link. In this picture, they're hard at work in the research lab.



If you'd like to know more about our research – get in touch!
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