

New Zealand Multiple Sclerosis Research Trust

Presentation to NANZ Conference
Queenstown August 2022
Neil Woodhams ONZM - Trustee

Objectives

- Stimulating and Co-ordinating MS Research in New Zealand
- Collaborating with other research organisations on MS research
- Sharing research information with MSNZ and the regional societies and PwMS.
- Publishing and dissemination articles and information on MS Research
- Creating a research environment which attracts and retains high quality health professionals to work in NZ.
- Advocating to Government to encourage MS research in NZ.

Current Research Activity



MSBase Introduced to NZ

- Internationally recognised MS Database [MSBase | Home](#)
- 83,193 patients registered
- 41 Countries
- 891 Principal Investigators

Consists of:

- iMED front end individual patient record for patient management by their neurologist
- Cloud based anonymised record accessible worldwide by approved MS researchers

Current Research Activity

- Sponsor of the researcher undertaking the survey of PwMS who have gone overseas for stem cell treatment: <https://msresearch.nz/ahsctsurvey/>
- This links closely to MSNZ's advocacy for aHSCT to be available in NZ.
- Fellowship for Dr Zoe Dyer undertaking aHSCT research at St Vincent's Center for Applied Medical Research Sydney

Dr Dyer research is titled: **“An investigation of regulatory T cell survival, renewal, and diversity after autologous hematopoietic stem cell transplant for multiple sclerosis”**

Current Research Activity

Research by Assoc. Professor Jack Flannagan at School of Medical Sciences
Auckland University

Project title

From cancer to pain, testing a clinically used cancer medicine to treat
neuropathic pain in Multiple Sclerosis.

Current Research Activity



Dr Amy McCaughey-Chapman

Generating oligodendrocytes from adult human skin for the treatment of multiple sclerosis - Stage 1

Objective

Sharing MS research information with MSNZ and regional MS Societies

- Annual Research webinars
- Sponsorship of Professor Mitch Wallin and Dr Bill Carroll to the “Global Burden of Neurological Disease Conference” in Auckland 2018

MS Research Webinars



We host an annual series of webinars for PwMS and the wider community.

Previous years topics	Presenters
MS and Pregnancy.	Dr Jokubaitis - Department of Neuroscience, Central Clinical School at Monash University.
Progression and MS.	Prof Tomas Kalincik , Royal Melbourne Hospital MS Centre. Dr Julia Morahan , MS Australia.
COVID-19 and Genetic Impacts on MS.	Dr Justin O'Sullivan , Liggins Institute University Auckland. Dr Ernie Willoughby , Trustee, NZ MS Research Trust.
Advances in aHSCT.	Dr Wallace Brownlee , Queen Square MS Centre in London. Dr Jennifer Massey , University of New South Wales. Dr Richard Doocey , Auckland DHB.
Exploring how lifestyle modifications can improve MS outcomes.	Dr Julia Morahan , MS Research Australia.

We are in the middle of planning this year's webinars details will be available on our website.

2022 Webinar Series



Webinar 1 – **“Celebrating NZ Researchers”**

Saturday 3rd September 2022 – 9.30am – 11am

Dr Kimberley Pitman – A University of Otago Graduate Dr Pitman has been working since 2015 as a post-doctoral research fellow in the Glial research team at the University of Tasmania where was awarded a prestigious NHMRC fellowship to focus on research aiming to identify genes and proteins that are important for the function of the brain cells that are affected in Multiple Sclerosis.

Amy McCaughey-Chapman, PhD – Amy is a CatWalk Trust Research Fellow at the Centre for Brain Research, University of Auckland and NZMSRT Research Grant Recipient. She will discuss the exciting research, funded by the NZ MS Research Trust looking into generating oligodendrocytes from adult human skin for the treatment of MS.

2022 Webinar Series



Webinar 2 – “Epstein-Barr Virus – The Hot Topic”

Saturday 24th September 2022 – 10am – 11.30am

Dr Mitchell Wallin, MD, MPH, FAAN - Dr. Wallin is currently Director, VA MS Center of Excellence-East, based at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, and is Professor of Neurology at George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC and Clinical Associate Professor of Neurology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Through funding from the National MS Society, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Merit Review system, NIH and other sources he has used large population cohorts to address clinical and epidemiological problems and has published over 90 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. Dr. Wallin’s research and writing over the past 20 years has focused on neuroepidemiology, neuroinfections and multiple sclerosis (MS)

Dr Corey Smith – Head of the Translational and Human Immunology laboratory at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Melbourne. His work has focused heavily upon understanding T-cell mediated control of viral infections in humans, including Epstein Barr Virus (EBV), and the development of novel therapies to treat disease associated with these common viral infection. This work has been translated into multiple clinical trials in head and neck cancer, brain cancer, organ transplant recipients and multiple sclerosis. This work has now been licenced for commercial development by Atara Biotherapeutics, who are developing a T-cell base therapy approach that targets Epstein Barr Virus (EBV) in MS patients.

2022 Webinar Series



Webinar 3 – “Looking after our bodies, inside and out”

Tuesday 11th October 2022 – 6pm – 7.30pm

Gilly Davy - Gilly is a renowned neuro physiotherapist based in Auckland. She has worked in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and is passionate about helping clients with a neurological condition to achieve their goals. She works closely with all her clients to achieve their goals. She is also the founder and director of the MS Get a Head Start, a game changer in MS rehabilitation. Gilly will discuss the latest research into the role that exercise plays in managing MS.

Dr Wolfgang Marx – Undertaking Research out of the Deakin University Dr Marx’s research explores the axis between diet, mood and the gut microbiome in people with MS. A primary objective is to explore the role of diet in influencing the gut microbiome and if so, if this influences the effectiveness of interventions that target fatigue and depression and MS progression.

Funding for Clinicians specialising in MS

- The Trust has \$150,000 p.a. for three years for Health Professionals wanting to specialise in MS.
- The terms of this funding is flexible and the trustees have considerable discretion.
- I invite clinicians to approach either Dr Willoughby or myself to discuss ideas and proposals. We are open to proposals which may not work with other funders.

Objective

Advocating to Government to encourage MS Research in NZ.

- Membership of [New Zealanders for Health Research](#)
- Advocating for
 - Govt spends \$140m p.a. on Health Research in total. This is 0.76% of GDP
 - increasing the proportion of GDP spent on Health Research from 0.76% to 2.46%
 - Health research being a fundamental responsibility of the new Health NZ

Conclusion:

The Trust is a developing story.

It is part of a long term solution to improve access to specialist MS services in NZ

It represents a serious commitment by PwMS, their families, clinicians and researchers to find solutions and take control of their own destiny

Donations and bequests to support our work are welcome.

Details available on our website: **www.msresearch.org.nz**