

*A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM
STOCKTON MS GROUP*



MONTHLY EVENTS

Drop-In:-

Greens Lane Methodist Church, Hartburn. We meet here 1pm to 4pm on a Tuesday.
Alternative therapy is available on these days for those who enjoy or would like to try Shiatsu.

Shopping Online????

Buy items or book holidays through the Stockton MS Group web site and we will receive a donation. There are over 100 top retailers to choose from. It all helps raise funds for the group.

Group Contacts

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NEWS UPDATE

MEMBERSHIP FEES

The yearly membership subscription of £5 is now due.

Payments can be made at the Drop-In, Social Evening or sent by post. All cheques made payable to Stockton MS Group please.

Payments by post can be sent to:-

Mr D Henderson

74 Windermere Road

Stockton-on-Tees TS18 4LY

www.medicalnewstoday.com 3 December 2019

MS: Common herpesvirus variant raises risk

New research distinguishes between two similar variants of the human herpesvirus 6 and finds that one variant significantly increases the risk of developing multiple sclerosis (MS).

MS is an autoimmune condition that affects around 400,000 Trusted Source people in the United States and 2.5 million people worldwide.

The condition affects the central nervous system, "tricking" the immune system into attacking the protective myelin sheath that surrounds the nerve cells.

The medical community has not yet identified the cause of MS. Many health professionals believe that genetic predisposition plays a role, with environmental factors such as smoking and viral infections potentially triggering MS risk genes.

Of all the viruses that may play a role in the development of MS, the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) — which causes mononucleosis — has received the most attention from researchers.

EBV Trusted Source, also known as human herpesvirus 4, is part of the herpesvirus family. A significant number of epidemiological studies Trusted Source have pointed to EBV infection, as well as a number of other environmental factors, as potential causes of MS.

In addition, recent research Trusted Source has suggested that EBV can activate risk genes for other autoimmune conditions, such as lupus.

Scientists have also associated human herpesvirus 6 Trusted Source (HHV-6) with MS.

However, previous studies linking HHV-6 and MS were not able to differentiate between herpesvirus 6A (HHV-6A) and herpesvirus 6B (HHV-6B).

So, new research — which appears in the journal *Frontiers in Immunology* — aimed to make this distinction and examine the associations with MS.

Examining herpesvirus variants and MS

Anna Fogdell-Hahn — an associate professor in the Department of Clinical Neuroscience at the Karolinska Institutet in Solna, Sweden — is one of the senior investigators and the corresponding author of the new study.

Fogdell-Hahn and team examined the antibodies in the blood of 8,742 people with MS and 7,215 matched controls. They then did the same in a pre-MS cohort of 478 people and 476 matched controls.

In the MS cohort, the participants were matched for age at diagnosis, sex, and residency, while in the pre-MS cohort, they were matched for "biobank, sex, date of blood sampling, and date of birth."

The researchers examined the antibodies against two proteins that differ the most between HHV-6A and HHV-6B, thus distinguishing between the two forms of the virus.

HHV-6A more than doubles MS risk

The research concluded that participants with MS were 55% more likely to have antibodies against the HHV-6A protein than the controls.

In the pre-MS group, people with a 6A viral infection were more than twice as likely to go on to develop MS than the controls. By contrast, HHV-6B was not associated with MS.

Also, the earlier in life the discovery of the virus, the higher the person's likelihood of developing MS.

The scientists also found that people who had EBV in addition to HHV-6A had an even higher risk of developing MS.

"This is a big breakthrough for both the MS and herpesvirus research," says Fogdell-Hahn.

"For one, it supports the theory that HHV-6A could be a contributing factor to the development of MS. On top of that, we are now able, with this new method, to find out how common these two different types of HHV-6 are, something we haven't been able to do previously."

Anna Fogdell-Hahn

"Both HHV-6A and 6B can infect our brain cells," she adds, "but they do it in slightly different ways. Therefore, it is now interesting to go forward and attempt to map out exactly how the viruses could affect the onset of MS."

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'They think disability is almost worse than being dead'

"I won't let you make me feel bad for the things I cannot do, I am tired of being talked over by people like you."

To watch Tilly Moses perform her folk music on stage, there are no visual clues she's disabled - although the message is there loud and clear in some of her lyrics.

A year ago, Moses was diagnosed with **fibromyalgia**, a chronic condition that causes pain and fatigue. It often comes after a big shock to the immune system: Moses, who grew up in Stanton, Suffolk, had meningitis when she was 11.

She says her fibromyalgia can leave her so tired she passes out. It also affects her cognitive function and she can be in a lot of pain, and she sometimes has to use a walking stick or a wheelchair.

"When people see me, because I'm young and I'm performing, people assume you can't be those things and be disabled."

The misconception annoyed her and so she started writing songs about it.

Moses, 21, says it wasn't until she started to class herself as disabled that she felt "liberated", although she's been shocked by the responses of some people.

"Disabled people aren't represented in the media fairly; there's a lot more to being disabled than what people think," she says. "It's a societal issue; there's this attitude that a disability is something to overcome."

On one occasion when she had her walking stick, she sat on one of the disabled seats on a bus. A woman was talking loudly about her, saying she must have been faking it because her makeup was done so nicely, she says.

"It's as if we're not full people and that we live such tragic lives that we wouldn't think about makeup and dressing nicely. I couldn't believe what I was hearing; I was gobsmacked."

Another time, she was at an airport and her boyfriend was pushing her in a wheelchair. He was messing around and pushed her quickly down a ramp, causing her to laugh because it was funny, she says.

"A man looked at me and was so perplexed. There's a perception that my life must be tragic and why would I be laughing. My life is fine, I wouldn't change anything.

"I'm happy but people find that really perplexing, as if being disabled is almost worse than being dead. I've got friends, family, a boyfriend, a career, my music. Sometimes I can't get out of bed but that's fine."

The University of York politics graduate, who released her first album in 2017, says she built up an audience base and enjoyed some "minor success" before her diagnosis. She hopes to use her platform to continue to talk positively about disability, and share people's stories and ideas that "don't get aired in a musical capacity".

"I'm making a small difference where I can and I'm really honoured to be in that position," she says.

Disabled academic Gill Loomes, who has multiple conditions including fibromyalgia, says what Moses is doing is "really quite important".

"One of the things that amazes me is how she manages to get some quite complex political social theory into song lyrics and makes them lyrical and accessible without losing the context. A "stand-out" song for her is The Social Model.

*"I am not broken nor a problem to solve, I am not a learning tool to make you more evolved,
I'm a passion and a person, I have ambition, love and drive,
I could be free of all the shackles you draw on me in your mind if you'd let me be."*

"To have someone in Tilly's position, who not only has a grasp of the condition with all its nuances and complexities but also can put it in a way that grabs people's attention, is a really achievement," says the 36-year-old, from Halifax. "It's almost an agenda for disability rights politics; it's great to have somebody actually putting these issues on the public agenda." For Moses, who says she's "really proud" to have written songs that resonate, her music doesn't just give her a voice - it also helps to muffle the negativity faced by disabled people.

"I find it empowering to stand up on stage, singing about my life and what it's like to be disabled without fear of anyone interrupting me and telling me I'm wrong."

DISCLAIMER

Articles in this Bulletin are meant for the sole purpose of information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

'I was put into care home for elderly at 46'

A year ago Nina Thair was living in her own home and working as a teacher at a secondary school in Brighton.

She had overcome many challenges after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in her late 20s - 17 years ago.

But she was still able to live independently with the help of walking aids.

After a deterioration in her condition, all that changed.

A lack of support in the community meant she had to be admitted to hospital.

And from there, she was transferred to a care home for the elderly as she needed a wheelchair and could no longer cope with the stairs at her home.

"The care was fantastic - the system is full of people doing their absolute best in very challenging circumstances," Ms Thair says.

"But I should not have been there. I am a 46-year-old woman and I was in a bed that was meant for a dementia patient.

"There are just not the services available for working-age adults like me."

'My money is not my own'

In the end, Ms Thair spent 10 months in the care home before being able to move into a specially adapted flat.

While in the home, she had to sell her flat for much less than it was worth and she has now started paying the cost of her care.

"I have always worked full time despite my MS, saving and paying in to a mortgage," Ms Thair says. "But I've had to take early retirement now. I always had a dream of going travelling and writing and blogging about my experience.

"But I've now realised that is not possible - all my money has to go on my care. Because of my disability, my money is not my own. It is massively unfair.

"I've probably gone through half of it [my money] in the past six weeks and in another six to eight weeks the rest will be gone.

"I am not saying I should not contribute - but everything I planned to do is gone. It breaks my heart.

"You see the same with elderly people who have saved all their lives and want to give their family an inheritance. People should be entitled to care if they need it. Politicians just do not understand it."

When Ms Thair's money does run out, she will be once again reliant on what local services can be provided. Currently, she has help from two carers but fears this may not continue in the long term.

"Soon I will not have any money," she says. "I will be back at the sharp end of it fighting to get the care I need.

Widespread concern

It is a fight that is becoming increasingly difficult. There are more than one million adults reliant on social care provided by councils.

A survey of nearly all directors of social care across England indicates 94% have little or no confidence they will be able to meet their statutory responsibilities next year, with 90% saying they have concerns they have insufficient capacity to cope this winter.

Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) president Julie Ogley said it was clear the situation was "getting worse".

And the problems accessing care were causing people to end up in hospital, go without care or rely on friends and family.

"Good care and support transforms lives," she added.

Election campaign

ADASS said the system was "desperately short of funding" but has also called for wider changes.

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During the election campaign, all three main parties in England - social care is devolved - have promised to act.

The Tories and Lib Dems want to see a cross-party approach adopted to come up with new proposals.

And the Tories have made an explicit commitment no-one should have to sell their own home to pay for care.

Labour, meanwhile, has called for free personal care to be introduced for those who need help washing or dressing.

It has said this would be targeted at older people first, before being rolled out to working-age adults.

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Disabled workers suffer pay penalty

Disabled employees are paid 12.2% less than their non-disabled peers, according to official data.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that in 2018 the median pay for non-disabled workers was £12.11 an hour, against £10.63 for disabled.

London had the widest disability pay gap at 15.3%, with the narrowest in Scotland, at 8.3%.

The gap was the widest for those in their 30s and 40s, the ONS said in its report.

The data underlines the struggle facing many disabled workers, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) said.

"Too many disabled people continue to face prejudice and struggle to get into employment or to remain in work, and are less likely to progress to senior management roles or to work in professional occupations," said the CIPD's Dr Jill Miller.

"Businesses that aren't inclusive - and don't manage health and disability effectively - risk missing out on hard-working and talented individuals, and damaging their reputation among staff and customers."

Angela Matthews, head of policy and research at Business Disability Forum, added: "Disabled workers are not 'one group'. Some people with disabilities do not experience many barriers in work, and others experience many, multiple barriers.

"But we know that unjustified attitudes about what various groups of disabled people can and can't do are still widespread, and affect many employment related issues, including equal pay, bonus pay, and pay increases," Ms Matthews said.

The ONS report is the first analysis of disability pay gaps in the UK using newly reweighted earnings data from the Annual Population Survey.

To define disability, the ONS uses the Government Statistical Service (GSS) definition. This identifies "disabled" as a person who has a physical or mental health condition, or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more, that reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

The ONS said disabled females were in general paid 10.1% less than non-disabled females in 2018 - narrower than the pay gap between disabled and non-disabled male employees who had a gap of 11.6%.

However, employment rates for disabled men and women were similar at 51.7% and 50.4%.

The ONS also found that those disabled employees with mental impairments had the biggest pay gap at 18.6%, while the gap was 9.7% for the physically impaired.

Much of the difference in pay can be put down to factors such as what employees do and how qualified they are, the agency said.

Using the GSS definition of disability, the ONS said 18.9% of people in the UK aged 16 to 64 years were disabled in 2018. Women were more likely to be disabled than men, at 21.1% and 16.6%, respectively.

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YOUR CHRISTMAS JOKES

1. How did the ornament get addicted to Christmas?

He was hooked on trees his whole life.

2. *Why was Santa's little helper depressed?*

Because he had very low elf esteem.

3. *What does the Grinch do with a baseball bat?*

Hits a gnome and runs.

4. *What do you call a broke Santa Claus?*

Saint-nickel-less.

5. *What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?*

A rebel without a Claus.

6. *Why did Frosty ask for a divorce?*

His wife was a total flake.

7. *Why does Scrooge love reindeer so much?*

Because every single buck is dear to him!

8. *What do you get when you cross a duck with Santa?*

A Christmas quacker.

9. *What's Santa's favorite snack food?*

Crisp Pringles.

10. *Why do mummies like Christmas so much?*

They're into all the wrapping.

11. *How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?*

Nothing. It was on the house!

12. *How do you help someone who's lost their Christmas spirit?*

Nurse them back to elf.

13. *What do you call an elf wearing ear muffs?*

Anything you want. He can't hear you!

14. *What nationality is Santa Claus?*

North Polish.

15. *What do you call a blind reindeer?*

I have no eye deer.

16. *What do you call an obnoxious reindeer?*

Rude-olph.

17. *How is Christmas exactly like your job?*

You do all the work and some fat guy in a suit gets all the credit.

18. *What's every elf's favorite type of music?*

Wrap.

19. *What do you call a scary looking reindeer?*

A cariboo.

20. *What do you get when you cross a snowman and a vampire?*

Frostbite.

21. *What's the absolute best Christmas present?*

A broken drum—you can't beat it!

MEMBERS COMPETITION

The monthly quiz will now just be for fun only with the answers as always at the bottom of the following month's bulletin.

- 1/ Bill Murray plays successful TV executive Frank Cross in which modern take on Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"?
- 2/ Which country likes to start the festive season with a warming glass of Bombardino, a mixture of brandy and advocaat?
- 3/ If you were born on Christmas Day, what's your star sign?
- 4/ Bethlehem is a tiny village in which UK country?
- 5/ The Twelve Days of Christmas traditionally finish on which date?
- 6/ St. Stephen's Day is also known as what?
- 7/ On Christmas Day 1950, what did four Scottish students steal from Westminster Abbey?
- 8/ In the Christmas film 'It's a Wonderful Life', what does Clarence receive for accomplishing his mission?
- 9/ Which Christmas carol demands figgy pudding?
- 10/ How many Christmas number ones did Cliff Richard achieve?
- 11/ What was Mr. Bean searching for when he got his head stuck in the turkey?
- 12/ What are the 4 Cardinal directions?

Answers to last quiz:

1/ Bureau 2/ Cancer 3/ Cherry 4/Citizen 5/Diesel 6/Friday 7/Engine 8/Face 9/ Thing
10/Woodstock11/ Pluto 12/ Indiana Jones 13/Greyhound 14/Ginger 15/Homer