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UB neurosurgeons experimenting with MS procedures

Source: [WNED Buffalo](#)

Researchers at the University at Buffalo Neurosurgery Department began testing a new procedure last week for treating multiple sclerosis.

The doctors are the first in North America to rigorously study the method. But their research is not without its controversy.

Dr Adnan Siddiqui is busy these days. Over the last week, he has performed an experimental surgery on ten MS patients in Buffalo.

The procedure comes from a new line of thinking that connects the nerve disease with a narrowing of veins in the chest and neck.

"There's significant amount of data to suggest there may be something," Siddiqui said.

Along with research partner Dr Elad Levy, Siddiqui is trying to determine if stenting and ballooning key veins in MS patients could hold answers for how to better treat the disease.

Some MS sufferers outside the United States have undergone the procedure. But Levy says some in the medical community think even testing it is premature.

He says the first order of business is determining if the procedure is safe.

"There have been complications reported on patients done elsewhere, not here in Buffalo.

Therefore, this needs to follow the scientific process. We have not, beyond a doubt, demonstrated that this procedure works," Levy said.

"This is an outside the box idea. There are some very interesting data that have been generated that has caused us to proceed down this path. But it's just an idea at this point," Siddiqui said.

While Siddiqui and Levy say the surgeries have gone well, they will wait a month before disclosing any results.

An independent board at UB will then determine whether the research will continue to its next phase.

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Overheating a multiple sclerosis threat

Summer heat can cause the recurrence of MS symptoms for people with multiple sclerosis, a US neurologist warns.

"Heat - whether from infection, air temperature, prolonged exercise or even consuming hot liquids or foods - can provoke the return of old MS-related symptoms such as numbness, stiffness, weakness or even vision loss," Dr Elliot Frohman, director of the Multiple Sclerosis Program and the MS Clinical Center at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, says in a statement.

Researchers found the heat can slow down the speed of nerve messages for people with MS but heat alone does not cause a new attack or any additional nerve damage, Frohman says.

"Most patients can manage their heat sensitivity by avoiding situations that could be dangerous such as being out in severe heat without assistance, taking hot baths or showers, ingesting ice-cold beverages and, in some cases, drinking hot liquids like coffee and tea," Frohman adds.

New disability benefits system 'needs radical change or 2.5m incapacity claimants will remain unemployed'

The architect of a new benefits system has warned radical changes must be made to avert serious problems for vulnerable people.

Paul Gregg, Professor of Economics at the University of Bristol, said serious adjustments are necessary before 2.5million incapacity benefit claimants are moved onto the new Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in October.

In its current form, the system leaves large numbers of failed claimants to languish on jobseeker's allowance with no prospect of work, he said.

Reflecting on perceived errors in the process, he told The Times: 'To go ahead with these problems is not just ridiculous. It is, in fact, scary.'

All new claimants who would have sought incapacity benefit have had to apply for ESA since October 2008.

But according to the paper, thousands of vulnerable people with terminal cancer, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and clinical depression had their applications declined and were told to look for work.

'Introducing the ESA system for new claimants in 2008 was effectively a pilot, and all the signals from the pilot are that a lot of adjustments need to be made,' Professor Gregg said.

'There are serious problems with putting people who failed the test but still have serious health or other issues straight onto jobseeker's allowance, where there is no special help,' he added.

'To start moving people who may have been on incapacity benefit for years straight onto jobseeker's is ridiculous. Before wading into the stock, the system has to be right.'

The drive behind ESA is to focus on what people can do rather than what they cannot do, as a means of getting them back to work.

The process was previously condemned for failing the seriously ill and disabled.

A joint report last year by Macmillan Cancer Support and Citizens Advice found people in hospital were wrongly refused ESA and noted cancer sufferers were being told they were fit for work when they were battling long-term effects of the disease.

But Chris Grayling, Minister for Employment, told the paper there would be no change to the timetabled plans.

He said: 'We have to start helping those two and a half million people who've simply been left behind on the incapacity benefit.'

'This week we launched a review of the work capability assessment, which will report back at the end of the year, to make sure the assessment is fair.'

Officials said the Government's new work programme - which starts in summer 2011 - would provide tailored, specialised help much earlier than existing programmes, so that people do not have to languish on benefits.

They said that ministers had already announced that the rules around the work capability assessment would be changed to make them fairer for cancer sufferers undergoing chemotherapy

MS sufferers in the south refused cannabis drug

Doctors across southern England have been told not to prescribe a new cannabis-based drug developed for people with multiple sclerosis (MS).

Sativex has taken 11 years to develop and was licensed for NHS use last week.

However 10 primary care trusts have told doctors not to give the treatment, an oral spray designed to reduce pain, claiming it is not effective.

The MS Society charity described the decision as "disappointing" and said it would campaign against the decision.

The drug, distributed by Bayer in Newbury, costs £125 a bottle, which works out at about £11 a day for the average user.

Last week, the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said the product was safe to use.

However, a joint decision has been made not to prescribe Sativex by trusts in the South Central region, which include: Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, Southampton, Berkshire East and West, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes.

NHS Dorset has also advised doctors, nurses and specialists not to prescribe Sativex.

They said these types of drugs "were not cost effective and test results were not convincing".

If GPs want to give Sativex they must make a special case to the PCT for funding.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), which makes recommendations to NHS trusts about what products to use, has not yet given any guidance on the drug.

'Stigma attached'

Mike Bray, from Milford-on-Sea in Hampshire, has lived with the neurological condition for 15 years.

It affects the transfer of messages from the central nervous system to the rest of the body and there is no cure.

Last week he tried to get Sativex from his GP but he was told he could not be prescribed it.

"What he said to me when I went to the surgery was that he couldn't prescribe it but suggested that I contacted a neurologist," he said.

"If the motivation is purely financial I think it's a bit misguided. The longer you can keep people out of wheelchairs, the less they're likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease and that's ultimately saving money for the PCTs.

"I do feel there is a certain stigma attached to the fact it has been derived from a controlled substance.

"But on the other hand morphine is derived from a controlled substance as well and there isn't any no stigma associated with that.

"There is no leap made between heroin and morphine so why should there be a leap made between Sativex and cannabis."

The MS Society said the decision could affect hundreds of patients and it described it as "arbitrary and disappointing".

There are about 100,000 people living with the condition in the UK.

In a joint statement, the trusts said: "While we recognise the enthusiasm with which many with an interest in MS treatments will have greeted the news of an NHS licence for Sativex, and the distress and discomfort the symptoms cause, the position remains that this treatment has not been shown to be clinically effective in sufficient numbers of people to render it a treatment that the PCT would prioritise for routine funding."

Clarification re media comment on Sativex

02 July 2010 - GW Pharma

In response to a story in a regional UK media outlet yesterday, GW wishes to make the following clarification:

The story covered a decision by certain Primary Care Trusts (PCT) in a region of the UK that they were not paying for Sativex prescriptions. GW wishes to clarify that this decision was made last year, prior to the approval of Sativex when Sativex was only available on a "named patient" basis. At that time, Sativex was not approved in the UK.

Under the UK named patient programme, which was in place prior to approval, over 90% of PCTs in the UK paid for Sativex on the NHS. GW hopes that in light of formal regulatory approval in late June 2010, such policies would continue for the vast majority of PCTs.

It is inevitable under the PCT system in the UK that certain localities will adopt different policies towards medicines and Sativex is no different in this respect to any other medicine. The issue of PCT policies towards adoption of new medicines is one which GW's UK marketing partner, Bayer Schering Pharma, is accustomed to addressing and one that is common to the launch of all new medicines in the UK. There are 151 PCTs in England alone.

GW recognises and supports the efforts of people with Multiple Sclerosis, and their patient organisations such as the MS Society and MS Trust, to access Sativex. There is a clear unmet need that Sativex seeks to address and Sativex has the potential to make a meaningful difference to patients' quality of life.

In the short time since the launch of Sativex, GW confirms NHS prescriptions are being written around the UK and that it and its partner, Bayer Schering Pharma, are both pleased with progress to date.

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New website about work and disability

Source - [MSIF](#)

The UK MS Society has worked with other organisations to create Worklife, a website for people with long-term health conditions who want to stay in work, for their employers and for health professionals.

Dr Dhia Chandraratna, Head of International Research at MSIF, says, "Worklife should prove a useful resource for people with MS, their employers, and for MS societies and health professionals.

"While the information on rights, benefits, and the law are specific to the UK, much of the information is relevant to anyone dealing with a fluctuating chronic health condition, wherever they live."

The website officially launches on 7 July 2010. It is a culmination of work between The UK Department for Work and Pensions, The Employers Forum on Disability, EDF Energy, The Trades Union Congress, The Royal College of Occupational Therapists, The Royal College of Physiotherapists, The Royal College of General Practitioners, UCL Institute of Neurology at Queens Square, The UK MS Society, Arthritis Care, Terrence Higgins Trust, Macmillan, Parkinson's UK and Diabetes UK.

YOUR JOKES

FOR THOSE OF US WHO CAN REMEMBER THE GAME SHOW CELEBRITY SQUARES

Q.. *Paul, what is a good reason for pounding meat?*

A. *Paul Lynde: Loneliness!*

(The audience laughed so long and so hard it took up almost 15 minutes of the show!)

Q. *Do female frogs croak?*

A. *Paul Lynde: If you hold their little heads under water long enough.*

Q. *If you're going to make a parachute jump, at least how high should you be*

A. *Charley Weaver: Three days of steady drinking should do it.*

Q. *True or False, a pea can last as long as 5,000 years...*

A. *George Gobel: Boy, it sure seems that way sometimes.*

Q. *You've been having trouble going to sleep. Are you probably a man or a woman?*

A. *Don Knotts: That's what's been keeping me awake.*

Q. *According to Cosmopolitan, if you meet a stranger at a party and you think that he is attractive, is it okay to come out and ask him if he's married?*

A... *Rose Marie: No wait until morning.*

Q. *Which of your five senses tends to diminish as you get older?*

A. *Charley Weaver: My sense of decency..*

Q. *In Hawaiian, does it take more than three words to say 'I Love You'?*

A. *Vincent Price: No, you can say it with a pineapple and a twenty..*

Q. *What are 'Do It,' 'I Can Help,' and 'I Can't Get Enough'?*

A. *George Gobel: I don't know, but it's coming from the next apartment.*

Q. *As you grow older, do you tend to gesture more or less with your hands while talking?*

A. *Rose Marie: You ask me one more growing old question Peter, and I'll give you a gesture you'll never forget.*

Q.. *You've just decided to grow strawberries. Are you going to get any during the first year?*

A.. *Charley Weaver: Of course not, I'm too busy growing strawberries.*

Q. *In bowling, what's a perfect score?*

A. *Rose Marie: Ralph, the pin boy.*

Q. *It is considered in bad taste to discuss two subjects at nudist camps.. One is politics, what is the other?*

A. *Paul Lynde: Tape measures..*

Q. *During a tornado, are you safer in the bedroom or in the closet?*

A. *Rose Marie: Unfortunately Peter, I'm always safe in the bedroom.*

Q. *Can boys join the Camp Fire Girls?*

A.. *Marty Allen: Only after lights out.*

MEMBERS COMPETITION

A £5 prize will be given to the member whose entry has the most correct answers. Even if you do not know all the questions, send in those you have answered – you could still win!

USING ONE OF THE INITIAL LETTERS FROM EACH ANSWER WILL GIVE YOU THE NAME OF A LOCAL TOWN OR VILLAGE

- 1/ Colour of the rainbow
- 2/ King Arthur's magic sword
- 3/ April Birthstone
- 4/ Monopoly railway station
- 5/ Which Cumbrian town holds an annual horse fair
- 6/ Western sea fishing area
- 7/ One of the seven dwarves
- 8/ The cemetery in which you would find the grave of Marx
- 9/ The Shadows first hit without Cliff Richard
- 10/ Cluedo weapon
- 11/ An island off the north coast of Devon

Name:

Address:

Send Completed Forms To:
Mr D Henderson
74 Windermere Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 4LY

All entries to be received by the next social. The winner will be drawn from all entries received with the highest number of correct answers.

Answers to last quiz:

1/ Cello 2/ Engelbert Humperdink 3/ Airy Neave 4/ Tennyson 5/ Righteous Brothers
6/ Army 7/ London Central