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Dramatic breakthrough in MS research

Scientists today claimed they have taken a major step forward in understanding how to reduce the severity of multiple sclerosis.

A team at the University of Bristol carried out tests on mice and then on human brain tissue and found that the neuropeptide galanin was resistant to an MS-like disease, experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis.

Professor David Wynick, who works on the function of galanin in the relief of neuropathic pain, initiated the project and worked with professors David Wraith and Neil Scolding on the research. Wraith, who is working on a vaccine for the treatment of multiple sclerosis, said: "The results were really remarkable. Rarely do you see such a dramatic effect as this. Mice with high levels of galanin just didn't develop any signs of disease.

"We have a lot more to do to figure out how this works, but the results are extremely promising." A spokeswoman for the university said that although the results are "very encouraging" there is still a lot of work to be done before a drug can be developed, and it could be at least 10 years before one is on the market.

She said the research team are now expected to seek the "substantial" funding needed to advance their findings.

www.telegraph.co.uk 8 September 2009

Liposuction fat 'liquid gold of stem cells'

Some of the cells included in the fat can begin the process of reprogramming to stem cells immediately, without the need to grow them in a laboratory for weeks, according to researchers at Stanford University.

Skin cells, one of the most commonly used to make stem cells, have to be grown for between three or four weeks before the process can begin, they warn.

Scientists have developed techniques to turn different types of cells into induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS), which can then be turned into other tissue cells.

The scientists believe that the cells, called adipose cells, are more "primed" for change than other cells.

The findings were published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Dr Joseph Wu, who led the study, said: "Not only can we start with a lot of cells, we can reprogram them much more efficiently. Fibroblasts, or skin cells, must be grown in the lab for three weeks or more before they can be reprogrammed.

"But these stem cells from fat are ready to go right away."

Scientists have previously used adipose cells to reverse the symptoms of multiple sclerosis in a small group of patients.

Scientists find clue to dangerous side effect of MS drug

Scientists may have discovered part of the reason why Tysabri, a drug used to treat multiple sclerosis, may lead to the development of a rare but potentially deadly brain disease in some patients.

The drug seems to rouse the typically dormant JC virus from its slumber, allowing it to cross into the brain.

Although this finding may lead to a way of predicting who is at risk for the brain infection - called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) - at this point, the implications are still unclear.

"We don't know what this means until we find out over time whether or not people actually do get PML," said Patricia O'Looney, vice president of biomedical research at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in New York City. "But it certainly is exploring a key question."

The study authors also warned against coming to premature conclusions.

"We don't advocate a change in management [of the disease] at this point because the clinical relevance of these findings is still unknown," said Dr Igor J Koralnik, senior author of a paper appearing in the Sept 10 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. "But it should spur further research."

Natalizumab (Tysabri) first received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval in November 2004, only to be pulled from the market three months later after several patients in clinical trials developed the rare but deadly viral infection.

According to the study authors, as of July 24, 2009, 13 patients with multiple sclerosis taking Tysabri are known to have developed PML, along with one patient with Crohn's disease (Tysabri was approved to treat Crohn's in early 2008).

The JC virus is present yet dormant in about 90 percent of people. It can reactivate in people with AIDS or otherwise compromised immune systems.

"We don't have a very good handle right now on how to determine who's at higher risk for PML," O'Looney stated. "There's no way to monitor patients and no way to predict who will be susceptible. It's important to find some marker or indication of the presence of these viruses either in the urine or the blood."

In this latest study, 19 patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis who were taking Tysabri underwent lab work at three, six, 12 and 18 months after starting treatment.

After 12 months, measurements of JC virus in the urine rose from 19 percent (about normal) of samples to 63 percent at 12 months. At this time, only one patient showed JC virus in their blood.

By 18 months, the virus had infiltrated plasma samples in 20 percent of patients and blood cells in 60 percent of patients. And the virus type in question here had undergone a rearrangement that made it more adept at crossing into the brain. "The changes are usually only found in the brains of patients with PML [and] we think the virus acquired the [changes] during Tysabri treatment," Koralnik said.

Immune system responses associated with higher levels of JC virus dropped after six and 12 months of treatment. "This was unexpected," said Koralnik, who is director of the HIV/Neurology Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. "It dampened the immune response as measured in blood samples and that was associated with the appearance of the virus in the urine."

None of the patients developed PML or any indication that they might develop the infection.

"The next question is: does that mean that all those who have virus in the blood or rearrangement in the urine will develop PML?" Koralnik said. "This is something that obviously we can't answer with this pilot study. The epidemiology indicates that the development of PML is still a rare event in Tysabri-treated patients, but we hope that if we follow the appearance of the virus in the blood or urine and follow changes [in the actual virus], in the future we will be able to detect better those at risk of developing PML while in treatment."

Two other papers in the same issue of the journal described case studies of patients with multiple sclerosis who developed PML after using Tysabri. One was a 52-year-old man who became critically ill but eventually recovered.

The second was a 35-year-old man, who also recovered. The authors of this paper stressed that the risk of PML in patients being treated with Tysabri is still low, about one in 1,000 and possibly even lower.

Until there is a good way to predict who is at risk for PML, experts urged doctors to be alert for early signs of this brain infection.

"Patients and physicians still need to have tight vigilance for any new symptoms that can occur while a patient is on Tysabri," O'Looney said.

Author: Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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The 2p blood pressure pill that 'holds multiple sclerosis at bay'

A cheap blood pressure drug could hold the key to combating multiple sclerosis.

An MS expert has shown that the tablets taken by millions to lower blood pressure can also ease the symptoms – and even reverse paralysis.

Lawrence Steinman made the link when he researched the Lisinopril pills he was prescribed for high blood pressure.

Drugs currently used to treat MS, in which the immune system turns on the body, are of limited effectiveness and do not work for everyone.

Some cost up to £15,000 a year. Lisinopril, in contrast, costs as little as 2p per pill.

It is one of a group of drugs called ACE-inhibitors that lowers blood pressure by blocking a chemical that is key in the narrowing of blood vessels.

Research by Dr Steinman indicated that the chemical, called angiotensin-converting enzyme, also played a role in the inflammation responsible for much of the damage caused by MS.

Dr Steinman, of Stanford University in the U.S., showed that samples of brain tissue from MS patients had high levels of angiotensin-converting enzyme.

He then gave Lisinopril to mice before giving them a chemical that normally causes an MS-like illness in mice.

The creatures remained healthy, suggesting the blood pressure drug was holding MS at bay.

Strikingly, when he gave Lisinopril to mice after giving them the MS-causing chemical, paralysis was reversed, the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences reports.

Tests showed that Lisinopril boosted production of immune cells called regulatory T cells.

These protect against autoimmune diseases such as MS by dampening down the rogue immune response that damages the body. Dr Steinman called for Lisinopril to be tested on patients.

He cautioned though that drugs that work in mice don't necessarily work in humans.

Dr Susan Kohlhaas, of the MS Society, said: 'Drugs that dampen down an overactive immune system have been shown to be of some benefit to people with MS and intriguingly it seems Lisinopril may have this effect.

'It remains to be **seen** whether Lisinopril can play a role in preventing the onset or slowing the progression of MS. The only way to judge this is through larger clinical studies in humans.'

Ryan has them crying on the night

THERE wasn't a dry eye in the house as plucky Ryan McLaughlin was presented with his well-deserved gong.

The 14-year-old bowled over the audience when they heard of his single-minded efforts to stamp out multiple sclerosis.

His Shine On Scotland campaign included a march by 1,000 people on Holyrood.

He had hard-nosed MSPs in the palm of his hand as he tried to persuade them to dish out free vitamin D supplements to kids and mums-to-be to help stop people getting the debilitating disease. His campaign was spurred by heartache at seeing the pain his mum Kirsten suffered from MS - and his determination to save others from the same fate.

Ryan, of Drumchapel, Glasgow, cut a dashing figure as he went on stage to rousing applause in a kilt of purple, blue and green Old Lang Syne tartan and Bonnie Prince Charlie jacket. He said: "I can't believe I've won - I'm ecstatic.

"This is a huge boost to my campaign and I hope more people get behind it as a result."

Ryan was joined at the bash by Kirsten, dad Alan and ten-year-old brother Darren.

Ex-businesswoman Kirsten, 34, who rested for three days so she could attend the event, said:

"I broke down in tears when it was announced Ryan had won. He is a true hero, a fantastic son."

And graphic designer Alan, 35, declared: "I'm the proudest dad in the world."

Ryan has also presented a short film about MS which has been viewed all over the world. It was even screened at half time during the Scottish Cup Final at Hampden.

Ryan was devastated when Kirsten was diagnosed with MS two years ago. The former European tae kwon do champ now struggles to climb stairs or even get dressed.

But after learning that vitamin D triggered by sunlight helps prevent the condition, Ryan launched his campaign.

As well as meeting politicians, doctors and charity workers to get his message over, the Knightswood High pupil helps Alan look after Kirsten.

Alan added: "Without Ryan's help, I do not know how we would have got through the ordeal. The last couple of years have been an extremely difficult time for our family, but Ryan has become mature beyond his years as a result."

Scotland has the world's highest MS rate, with over 12,500 sufferers. And Ryan's campaign has been backed by Harry Potter author JK Rowling, 44, whose mother Anne died of an MS-related illness in 1990 aged 45.

Ryan's fellow finalists were Abby Tombs, 11, and 13-year old Lauren Riddell.

Brave Abby, of Govanhill, Glasgow, suffers from auto-immune disease lupus which attacks her kidneys and makes her weak and tired. But she devotes at least three days a month to helping Kidney Research UK, raising around £10,000 for the charity.

Lauren, of Cairneyhill, Fife, was just five when she was diagnosed with a rare incurable genetic condition, neurofibromatosis type one.

It has caused two tumours on her head and given her skin blemishes which can spread all over her body. But she helps care for disabled dad James, 42, and brother Chris, 16, who has learning difficulties, as well as raising cash for Cancer Research.

'I'll try to walk the last metre'

Mary Head has Multiple Sclerosis. She can't get around without a walking aid, and on a bad day is confined to a wheelchair.

But this year she is determined to do the Great North Run, even if she only walks the last step. Every year, Mary, from Nottingham, watches the run on TV and wishes she had the physical ability to take part - and in 2009 she will.

Eight able runners, including her daughter Elizabeth, will help push her round the 13.1 miles of road - except for the final few steps which she will try to undertake herself.

It's a huge challenge.

Warning Signs

Mary, a qualified nurse, was diagnosed with MS 14 years ago but, because of her medical training, she'd already suspected something wasn't right.

"About 20 years ago during an eye examination the optician told me my optic discs were very pale and they should be pink and healthy.

"But, because I'm very pale and have a fair complexion with red hair, we thought that could be the reason," Mary said.

"But I spoke to another nursing friend and we looked it up in a medical book, and it said it could be an early sign of MS. I remember thinking 'bloody hell'".

Over the years, she started to notice odd things happening to her, and when the right side of her body went numb she recognised the signs:

"When I was finally referred to the hospital, I asked the specialist, 'Is it MS?' He said 'If it is, it's the best sort' and I remember thinking, 'How can there be a best sort?'"

'I'm a star'

Mary's MS was diagnosed early and she believes she was "fortunate" that there was an MRI machine in Nottingham.

She describes her condition as "like getting old quickly", but thinks life is "too short" to dwell on the negatives - which is where the Great North Run comes in:

"I've been given this condition, there has got to be a reason, but everyone has something.

"To do something as wonderful as the Great North Run, and to be part of the atmosphere, will be magic. If I'm upright and not in my chair crossing the line, I'll think I'm a star.

"It will be difficult, but you have to seize and go for things, not hang around and wait."

A special wheelchair has been loaned to Mary so that she can take part in the event and she is hoping to raise £2,000 for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

DISCLAIMER

The articles in this Bulletin are meant for the sole purpose of information only, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee

Discover over 175 great days out with the NEW Rough Guide to Accessible Britain

The second edition of the Rough Guide to Accessible Britain is packed with even more fun and inspiring ideas for disabled people. All reviews have been written by disabled visitors and contain useful information on accessibility to help you plan a truly memorable and successful day. And with over 175 great ideas across the UK, there really is something for everyone.

Amongst the attractions reviewed you'll find:

Museums and galleries	Cities, towns and coastal attractions
Heritage Centres	Sports and outdoor activities
Family fun, animals and wildlife	Leading venues and special events
Parks and gardens	Scenic journeys and walks

For each location you'll find details of facilities including:

Wheelchair accessibility	Facilities for visually impaired or blind people
Guide dogs allowed	Facilities for mobility impaired people
Accessible toilets	Powered scooter availability
Accessible parking	BSL interpreters

How to order a guide

Simply visit www.accessibleguide.co.uk or call 0800 953 7070 quoting M0254
Guides are FREE to Blue Badge holders and £6.99 (inc p&p) for everyone else.

Please note we can post to UK addresses only.
This offer is only available while stocks last.
Please allow 21 days delivery from receipt of your order.

If you are a blue badge holder all you need to do is tell us the name of the authority that issued your badge when placing your order.

YOUR JOKES

On a Septic Tank Lorry:
Yesterday's Meals on Wheels

On a Plumber's Van:
'We repair what your husband fixed.'

On another Plumber's Van:
'Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber.'

On a Church's Notice board:
'7 days without God makes one weak.'

At a Tyre Shop
'Invite us to your next blow-out.'

In a Non-smoking Area:
'If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action.'

At an Optometrist's Office:
'If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place.'

On a Taxidermist's window:
'We really know our stuff.'

At a Car Dealership:
'The best way to get back on your feet - miss a car payment.'

In a Vet's waiting room:
'Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!'

In a Restaurant window:
'Don't stand there and be hungry; come on in and get fed up.'

RADIATOR SHOP:
'Best place in town to take a leak.'

Outside a Car Exhaust Centre:
'No appointment necessary. We hear you coming.'

In a Podiatrist's office:
'Time wounds all heels'

On an Electrician's Van:
'Let us remove your shorts.'

On a Maternity Room door:
'Push. Push. Push.'

CLASSIFIED ADDS FOUND IN A NEWSPAPER

FREE PUPPIES

1/2 Cocker Spaniel, 1/2 sneaky neighbour's dog.

FREE PUPPIES.

Mother, A Kennel Club registered German Shepherd.

Father, Super Dog . . . Able to leap tall fences in a single bound.

MEMBERS COMPETITION

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

The first letter of each answer will spell out the name of an American State. Name the state capital also.

- 1/ Which ancient map, showing the world in 1275, is kept in Hereford cathedral?
- 2/ Which is the fourth most populous country in the world?
- 3/ What is the main port of Morocco?
- 4/ Which is the black quarter of New York?
- 5/ Who came to grief flying too close to the sun?
- 6/ Which fruit is dried to make raisins
- 7/ What did the Ancient Mariner kill
- 8/ Which programme is set in Ramsey Street?

STATE CAPITAL IS

Name:

Address:

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

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

Answers to last quiz:

1/ Malvinas 2/ Amber 3/ Runnymede 4/ Yashmak 5/ Lapwing 6/ Almonds 7/ Nolans 8/ Douglas