New Collaborative on Multiple Sclerosis Aims to Slow Progression of Disease

Center for Persons With Disabilities
NEW COLLABORATIVE ON MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AIMS TO SLOW PROGRESSION OF DISEASE

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Despite significant progress in the development of treatments for people with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (MS), there are few treatment options for people with progressive forms of MS. The newly formed International Collaborative on Progressive MS has published an opinion paper outlining challenges in developing therapies for progressive MS and identifying key research priorities to propel efforts to stop MS progression.

The Collaborative is the greatest effort to date aiming at speeding research on progressive MS, and is formed of the MS Societies of Canada, Italy, Netherlands, the UK and the US, and the MS International Federation. The paper, by lead author Robert J. Fox, MD (Meilen Center for Multiple Sclerosis, Neurological Institute, and Lerner College of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic) and colleagues, identifies five key priority areas for research, and was published in the Multiple Sclerosis Journal (Online First, August 23, 2012).

"Overcoming the challenges of progressive MS is a key objective of the Society’s Strategic Response to MS," says Timothy Coetzee, PhD, Chief Research Officer of the National MS Society and member of the Collaborative. "This is just one of the ways we’re collaborating worldwide to speed clinical trials in progressive MS."

The hopes of most people who have MS today rest on finding a way to stop disease worsening and reverse the damage to restore lost functions. MS progression can be slow or it can be fast, but most agree that it occurs in the majority of those who have the disease, even those successfully treated for relapses.

There’s been a great deal of progress in treating relapsing forms of MS, with many FDA-approved therapies. But for every new therapy approved for relapsing forms of MS, people with progressive MS, for whom there are few significant treatment options, feel left behind. Virtually every therapy approved for relapsing MS has been tested, or is now in testing, in people with progressive forms of the disease. Up to now, clinical trials involving people with relapsing MS often rely on counting relapses or doing MRI scans to detect immune activity. The fact that there is no easy way to detect progression quickly is one reason why drug development for progressive MS is behind.

The mission of the International Collaborative on Progressive MS is to expedite the development of effective disease modifying and symptom management therapies for progressive forms of MS. To do so, research efforts are needed on several fronts to lay the groundwork needed to identify possible therapeutic targets and conduct clinical trials aimed at stopping progression of the disease.

For Utahns with MS looking for help, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Utah-Southern Idaho Chapter has a new local representative, Chelsey Banks. Contact her at 801-424-0113 or by email at Banks@NMSS.org. Learn more about the organization at www.cureMSutah.org and www.cureMSSidaho.org.