



News Release

CIHR makes recommendations on Canadian MS research priorities

For immediate release

Ottawa, August 31, 2010 – On Thursday, August 26, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), in collaboration with the MS Society of Canada, convened a meeting of leading North American experts in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) to identify research priorities for Canada in this area. Today, at a press conference in Ottawa, CIHR President Dr. Alain Beaudet announced the outcomes of the discussions and shared the recommendations he has made to the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health.

“There was unanimous agreement from the scientific experts that it is premature to support pan-Canadian clinical trials on the proposed Liberation Procedure,” said Dr. Beaudet. “There is an overwhelming lack of scientific evidence on the safety and efficacy of the procedure, or even that there is any link between blocked veins and MS.”

“The MS Society of Canada is a leading funder of MS research, so it was important for us to participate in the August 26 meeting,” said Yves Savoie, CEO and President of the MS Society of Canada. “We and the US National MS Society committed \$2.4 million last June to support seven research teams to focus on chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI) and its relationship to MS. We firmly believe the studies currently underway are critical to advance understanding in this area of MS research.” (MS Society news release, June 11, 2010: http://mssociety.ca/en/releases/nr_20100611.htm)

Dr. Beaudet has made the following three recommendations to the Minister of Health:

1. To establish a scientific expert working group made up of the principle investigators for the seven MS Society-sponsored studies (four from Canada and three from the US), scientific leadership from CIHR and the MS Societies, and a representative from the provinces and territories, to monitor and analyze preliminary and final results from these studies, as well as from other related studies from around the world. The first meeting of this expert working group should take place in this calendar year.
2. Based on the outcomes of these studies, the scientific expert working group should reach conclusions regarding (1) the association (or lack thereof) between impaired cerebral venous

drainage and MS; and (2) a common standard for reliably diagnosing the condition using imaging or other techniques.

3. Depending on these conclusions, the scientific expert working group should make recommendations on further studies including, if appropriate, a pan-Canadian interventional clinical trial.

Thursday's meeting consisted of a review of evidence, current international efforts and knowledge gaps, with an emphasis on the potential links between CCSVI and MS; a thorough review of past, current and proposed clinical trials; and the identification of clinical research priorities for Canada. Participants represented a range of disciplines including neuro and cardioimaging, immunology, neurosurgery, vascular surgery, pathology, neurology and intervention radiology.

"CIHR will continue to work with the MS Society of Canada and Health Canada to advance safe, evidence-based research and innovation on this devastating disease, which affects so many Canadians," Dr. Beaudet concluded.

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