



Welcome to the December 2023 edition of the Research Reporter!

## Research Round up

### October: ECTRIMS – the world's largest MS research conference

This month, researchers from across the globe gathered together to share their work at the ECTRIMS conference. Usually this work is ongoing, so it's a great way to learn about cutting-edge developments. We picked up three Hot Topics from the conference.

- ❄️ **Epstein-Barr virus (EBV):** For several decades, we've known there's a link between [EBV](#) and MS. Researchers showed how EBV changes people's risk of developing MS. And, how it might be tricking the immune system to cause MS. [Read more about the hot topic EBV on our website](#)
- ❄️ **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI):** MS doesn't discriminate. It can affect people of any background, age, gender or ethnicity. Researchers shared insights and strategies on how we can make MS research more diverse and inclusive. [Read more about the hot topic EDI on our website](#)
- ❄️ **The gut/brain axis:** The link between the gut and the brain is an exciting new area of MS research. Researchers shared their early findings showing connections between the gut, the gut bacteria, the immune system, and the brain. [Read more about the hot topic gut/brain axis on our website](#)

### November: Artificial Intelligence may help doctors interpret MRI scans more accurately



MRI scans can track how your MS progresses and help doctors make recommendations about which treatment may be best for you.

Researchers in Australia investigated how we can use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to make MRI reports more accurate. They found AI may help detect changes in an MRI more accurately, such as new or growing lesions. AI uses computers to spot patterns and details that might get overlooked by the human eye. It can process very large amounts of data.

[Read the full story on our website](#)

### December: The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The MS Society Tissue Bank

The Tissue Bank allows people to donate their brain and spinal cord tissue for MS research after their death. It's a vital resource for research, with donated tissue helping hundreds of scientists around the world advance our understanding of MS.

To celebrate, we'll be sharing new stories, interviews with researchers and information about the future of the Tissue Bank – get in touch if you'd like to share your story.

[Learn more about the achievements of the Tissue Bank on our website](#)

## Behind the headlines: Stem cells into brains of people with MS

You may have seen in the news that a clinical trial in Italy showed a technique to deliver special stem cells directly into the brains of people with MS. The team showed it was feasible and safe for a small group of people with secondary progressive MS.

This approach is different to HSCT where doctors use blood stem cells to regrow the immune system.

We need more research to confirm these results because this was a very small study. Then we would need clinical trials with a placebo, to see if this affects the condition.

[Read our explanation of the trial on our website](#)

## Meet the Researcher



[Dr Selinda Orr](#) is an immunologist who specialises in fungal infections. She told us how sharing her work with colleagues in MS research has led to an exciting project.

**Selinda says:** "In science, some of the biggest breakthroughs come when we bring knowledge from one field of research to a completely different area. The project I'm starting is a crossover of fungal immunology and MS research. I think it opens many exciting possibilities."

## Following the trial trail

Find the latest updates on some of the clinical trials we support

### ChariotMS

In October, Tina Morris became the hundredth person to join [ChariotMS](#). Our phase 2 trial testing whether cladribine can help people with MS maintain the use of their arms and hands.

**Tina says:** "The trial is really exciting and when I think there are over 130,000 people in the UK who have MS I feel very privileged to be part of it."



### Octopus

Our [Octopus trial](#) began recruitment in the UK earlier this year. Now, an extension of this trial – named Platypus – will recruit up to 250 participants in Australia. Platypus is funded by MS Western Australia and MS Australia.

This approach to clinical trials has the potential to change the treatment landscape for people with progressive MS around the world. We're pleased that people with progressive MS in Australia will have the chance to join the trial.

## And finally...

A science themed Christmas cracker joke:

**What was Santa's favourite subject at school? Chemis-tree!**

*Did you know? The "neuroscience" of why Christmas cracker jokes are so cheesy is that we ALL find them so terrible. So we are united together against the joke!*

If you'd like to know more about our research, or find out how you could involve research in your work – get in touch! You can reach the team at: [research.communications@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:research.communications@mssociety.org.uk)