Chair’s Report

Fall 2011

After a summer with incredible weather and a hiatus from our Board meetings, we are back at work and gearing up for our fundraising activities. The MS Walk raised almost $12 million this year, thanks to all the wonderful Walkers and volunteers who make this such a success each year. We will start our 2012 MS Walk meeting next month.

Earlier this year, on May 13th, the MS Society hosted the annual MS Research teleconference. This year Dr Paul O’Connor discussed the latest in MS research, including CCSVI, and took questions from callers. This can be downloaded from the MS Society website.

Be sure an order your Christmas cookies this year. Theses delicious handmade shortbread cookies with chocolate chunks come in a decorative tin and sell for $11 per tin. Please email your order to me at janvv@rogers.com by the middle of November.

Take care,

Jan van Velzen
Accessible Gas Stations

Savita Bhimsen

One of the consistent priorities for the MS Society of Canada is promoting and ensuring accessibility throughout Canadian cities. This year, one specific service that is being targeted is fuel stations. There are fewer and fewer full service gas stations across our province. In Markham and Stouffville, it seems as though there’s a gas station at virtually every intersection, but only a couple of these have a full service element to them.

Thankfully, this concern has not gone unnoticed in the community. The Town of Markham’s Advisory Committee on Accessibility is also investigating this matter. The issue was discussed at meetings in the spring and a meeting was then held with the Canadian Petroleum Institute to discuss the concerns, and possible solutions. According to the committee’s meeting minutes, it was agreed that there is a need to have some full service gas stations across the province and that these stations should have suitable signage that would clearly identify them. Councillors Alan Ho and Don Hamilton helped lead this initiative on behalf of the town. Another suggestion that was discussed was the possibility of including information on full service gas stations in the community on the town’s website.

Despite the small number of gas stations that offer full service, there are other fueling options for drivers. Esso offers full service to customers with disabilities at stations that are self-service only through their “Drivers with Disabilities” program, but only if the driver calls in advance and makes this request. Shell’s website describes a similar service, but the site doesn’t state that it’s mandatory for customers to call in advance of visiting the station. Shell does however recommend calling beforehand; this is to ensure that the station can accommodate the customer. Both of these companies require that the customer has a valid vehicle permit for persons with disabilities.

Petro Canada does have a full service gas station in Markham. It’s located at the corner of Hwy 7 and Kennedy Road and it features both full and self service pumps. Petro Canada also has a full service station in Stouffville, located on 10th Line near Main Street.

If you know of any other full service stations in our community, or if you have an opinion on accessibility at gas stations we’d like to hear from you. Send us an email at: info.yorkeast@mssociety.ca
Ask the Expert

Cassandra Belo

Q.:

With winter coming up is there a difference in the amount of vitamin D I get from the sun since I will be all bundled up?

A.:

Actually yes there is a difference in the amount of vitamin D you can get from the sun in the winter, especially in Canada. During the summer within a short period of time the UVB radiation from the sun gets absorbed into the skin and converts 7-dehydrocholesterol to a precursor which gets modified into vitamin D. But in Canada from November to February the sun is further away making it much more difficult to get vitamin D from the sun since the UVB rays are not as penetrative plus we do not bare as much skin in the winter. There are obvious concerns with relying on the sun to get vitamin D due to the known risk of skin cancer so other avenues to get the recommended daily amount are best. You can get vitamin D from your diet by eating oily fish such as tuna or salmon and fortified foods such as milk and cereal. Oral supplements can also be used to ensure your daily dose of vitamin D. It has recently been found that that average Canadian intake of vitamin D is only 230 International Units (IU) per day when the recommendation is 600 IU per day. Clearly there is an issue with Canadians getting the right amount of vitamin D! Make sure you talk to your doctor to find out ways to achieve the recommended vitamin dosages.

Vitamin D is important for bone health but it is also thought to have an immune function and cause reduction of inflammation. There is no concrete proof that vitamin D will prevent relapses or the progression of MS, but the research into how vitamin D can influence MS is ongoing. One trial of interest in the preliminary stages is going to study how treating children that have presented with at least one episode of MS-like symptoms with vitamin D affects their progression into MS. It will be interesting to see what this and other trials decide.
By: Cassandra Belo

The blood brain barrier (BBB) is an important factor to consider when targeting drugs to the brain. The BBB is made up of specialized cells that restrict certain substances such as bacteria or large molecules from passing from the blood vessels into the central nervous system (CNS). The BBB only allows the passage of essential molecules such as hormones, amino acids, glucose and oxygen into the CNS. Researchers have been stumped for years about how the BBB works and how to bypass it and there are emerging studies that are starting to solve the issue of getting past the BBB to treat the brain.

One group at Cornell University has found that adenosine is able to modulate the entry of large molecules into the brain. Adenosine is naturally found in the body and has receptors on the endothelial cells that make up the BBB of mice. The work they did was in vivo in a mouse model however humans have similar receptors. There is an existing FDA-approved drug called Lexiscan which is typically used in heart imaging in very ill patients. Lexiscan is a selective agonist for one of the adenosine receptors which means it is able to activate the receptor giving the ability to briefly shuttle larger molecules across the BBB. This is an important start in determining how to change the permeability of the BBB to allow for new drugs targeted directly to the brain.

One theory of how MS starts is that destructive immune cells cross the BBB into the CNS causing damage in the brain and spinal cord. With this new knowledge of the BBB perhaps there is a way to tighten the barrier instead of opening it in order to prevent the entrance of the immune cells. This group has patented their findings and started a company called Adenos Inc. which is going to be involved in drug testing and preclinical trials which hopefully will help learn more about how Lexiscan can be used in helping to treat neurodegenerative disorders and whether it is safe to use.

For years I have been looking for a very very wide shoes that weren't orthopedic looking. I have asked everyone I know and had no success.

A couple of weeks ago I asked my husband to take me down the street to an interesting looking shoe store that I have never been in. To my surprise the store had everything that I had been looking for all these years. They sell fine footwear and leather goods. They are an orthopedic footwear centre and also make custom made shoes.

They were extremely helpful and I came home with two pair of beautiful shoes. I was so excited at finding the store after all these years and they are just down the street. They have been there for nine years.

I wanted to share this with everyone who might need beautiful shoes including specialized ones.

The store is called Markham Village Boots and shoes. 80 Main St. N.[48 just north of 7] 905-472-2466.

Jo Sargent
CCSVI Information Night June 2011

By: Rita Berzins

Chronic Cerebro Spinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI) is a very controversial subject amongst the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) community. Some believe having the procedure, developed by Dr Paolo Zamboni, will alleviate MS symptoms. Some believe CCSVI is a condition on its own and should be treated with Dr Zamboni’s procedure. Neurologists who treat MS are not sure that there is a direct association between CCSVI and MS.

In June The CCSVI Foundation founded by an MS patient held an information night in Aurora. My husband Richard and I attended. This group promotes the procedure as a treatment for MS and gives some monetary assistance as well as advice to patients seeking the procedure – twelve people have received assistance as of June. The CCSVI Foundation is seeking charitable status. The results came by way of testimonials by people who have undergone the procedure. Statistics on patient diagnoses and mobility prior to the treatment as well as results were not extensive. Failures were not discussed. Vascular surgeon Dr. Sandy MacDonald made a slide presentation but failed to convince me of the necessity for the procedure.

Like Richard, the testimonial speakers had the attitude “What do you have to lose, especially if your MS is advancing?” It made for a lively discussion on the way home. I confess that my bias leans toward seeing a scientific assessment of any treatment. That is not yet available but studies are underway. Groups like this foundation have been the reason we are now seeing this research underway.

My personal mantra is “Balance hope and reality”. It enables me to live my life without all the ups and downs that false hopes can bring. In the thirteen years since I was diagnosed I have seen a number of ‘miracle cures’ come and go – canned pigs’ brains and bee stings are just a couple. I hope something good comes from the CCSVI research as the MS Society has invested precious donor funds. I won’t pin my hopes on this because if it is dismissed as a valid treatment for MS, I won’t have to go through the grieving cycle once again.
MS Walk 2012 Planning

The MS Walk Committee will be starting to meet again soon to start planning for the 2012 MS Walk and as usual we are looking for additional committee members. Just let us know if you would be interested in joining this delightful group and playing a more active role in the decision making process that helps make our MS Walk such a success year after year.

In the coming months we will also be selecting our Honorary Co-Chair for next year’s Walk. If you have any suggestions of eligible candidates, please let us know.

We can be reached at info.yorkeast@mssociety.ca

CCSVI Information Night—Markham-Stouffville

Are you interested?

Given the interest in and the many differing opinions on CCSVI our board is considering of holding a CCSVI information night in our community. Before planning such an evening though we wanted to be sure that there was adequate interest from our chapter in holding such an event. If you would be interested in participating in such an event, please send us an email to our chapter email address: info.yorkeast@mssociety.ca

Conference—Taking Strides by Taking Charge 2011

On November 18 and 19 the Toronto Chapter will be presenting Taking Strides by Taking Charge 2011, a conference for anyone with MS as well as their family members. A wide variety of topics relating to MS will be covered including research, exercise, fall prevention, heart health and caregiver coping strategies. There will also be an exhibit hall with a range of exhibitors.

For more information, visit http://mssociety.ca/toronto/mstc2011.html
Christmas Cookie Sale

We are once again selling cookies for the holidays. These will be the same delicious chocolate chip shortbread cookies we’ve sold in the past. They come in a decorative tin and are still only $11/tin.

To order these delicious treats, please email Jan at janvv@rogers.com

Markham-Stouffville Chapter Wing Night (Nov. 29)

Come join us again for Wing Night on **Tuesday, November 29 at 4:30 pm** at Colonel Mustard’s (at 6545 Highway 7, just west of Ninth Line). This is just a casual get together for anyone affected by MS or interested in learning more about the MS Society and interested in some good company and tasty wings. All are welcome to join us. If you do know you will be coming ahead of time, send us an email and let us know so we can make sure there’s enough room for all.  info.yorkeast@mssociety.ca

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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