



Health Research
Council of
New Zealand



Multiple Sclerosis Prevalence Study

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of New Zealand (MSSNZ) and the Health Research Council of New Zealand are funding the first ever study in the world to examine the prevalence of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) across a whole country.

As well as prevalence, the study is considering a variety of genetic and environmental factors associated with MS to determine whether any possible triggers for the condition can be identified.

The National MS Prevalence Study is operating out of the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and involves input from professionals throughout the country.

Why is the Study needed?

The most recent figures on MS prevalence are twenty years old, thus the true incidence of MS in this country is unknown. Providing an accurate measure of MS prevalence will enable the Society to make recommendations for adequate allocation of resources, planning of services, provision of support and availability of treatment for people with MS in NZ.

Furthermore, it is hoped that a greater understanding of the genetic and environmental factors associated with MS will allow researchers to better plan studies into potential therapies or preventive strategies for people at risk of developing MS.

Aims of the Study

The specific aims of the study are:

1. To accurately determine the number of people in New Zealand with multiple sclerosis.
2. To ascertain the level of disability experienced by those with MS.
3. To determine whether the prevalence of MS differs according to a person's ethnic background or ancestry.
4. To determine whether there is a link between latitude, (how far north or south a person lives) and the prevalence of MS.
5. To establish whether there is a link between time spent outdoors in sunshine and the prevalence of MS.
6. To determine the level of interest among participants in establishing a New Zealand multiple sclerosis register.

Study Progress

Findings from the first stage of the study (i.e. figures from the greater Auckland region and the middle of the South Island) will be announced at the reception held at Parliament on August 7th.

The final results of the study will be available by the end of 2007.

About Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic inflammatory condition affecting the central nervous system. Damage to the nervous system creates a range of challenges for people living with the condition, including, pain, fatigue, visual problems, fatigue and impaired mobility.

There is no cure for MS, but treatment can minimise the effects.

MS is thought to be the most common cause of disability among young New Zealanders.

About the MS Society

MSSNZ is a non-profit organisation made up of nineteen regional Societies. The Society provides on-going support, education and advocacy for people with MS and their support networks. It also aims to educate the general public, employers and health professionals about MS and to actively encourage on-going medical research.

Further information on the study is available from MSSNZ National Office:

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