

Headline: Studies set up to test hotly debated MS theory

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Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world, with about 75,000 people affected by the disease. The MS Society of Canada and the National MS Society in the U.S. have provided more than \$2.4 million in funding for seven research projects to examine if a relationship exists between MS and chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI, as theorized by Dr. Paolo Zamboni. They include:

- A study of vein abnormalities in children with MS and healthy children by Dr. Brenda Banwell, Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.
- An examination of MS patients, people with other neurological conditions and healthy volunteers, looking at vein abnormalities and tissue damage, by Dr. Fiona Costello, Hotchkiss Brain Institute, University of Calgary.
- Study using MRI and ultrasound imaging to compare head and neck veins in MS patients, healthy controls and people with other neurological diseases, by Dr. Aaron Field, University of Wisconsin.
- Study of the prevalence of CCSVI in MS patients, non-affected family members and unrelated people without the disease, by Dr. Anthony Traboulsee, University of British Columbia, and Dr Katherine Knox, University of Saskatchewan.

Some provinces have also announced funding for studies:

- Saskatchewan has committed \$5 million for clinical trials of Zamboni's procedure to unblock narrowed neck veins. The province has asked researchers to submit proposals by March 28.
- Newfoundland and Labrador plans to pay for an observational study of MS patients who have had the procedure in clinics outside Canada.
- New Brunswick announced a \$500,000 fund to help MS patients access the treatment in foreign clinics.
- Alberta says it will spend \$1 million to track results from people who have travelled out of the country for the procedure, to determine whether the province should proceed with a clinical trial.