

Cross Party Group on Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

**Wednesday 21st February 2024
6 pm – 7pm**

Attendees

David Torrance MSP
Liam McArthur MSP
Professor David Hunt
Elizabeth Quigley
Lachlan Bruce
Morna Simpkins
Kitty Gardiner
Lucy Clarke
Gail Elliott
Stephen Marjoribanks
Hew Matthewson
Stacey Adam
Vicky Young
Sarah Barnard
Keith Park

Apologies

Jackie Baillie MSP
Miles Briggs MSP
Beatrice Wishart MSP
Katy Clark MSP
Phil Sully
Jen Carpenter

1. Welcome and Introductions

David Torrance MSP opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. He noted that a protest outside of Parliament has caused some problems for attendees getting in to the building and noted that there may be some late arrivals as a result the difficulties getting in to the building.

It was noted that Liam McArthur MSP had agreed to take on the role of Vice Convener of the group in response to the Standards Committee formally requesting that the vacancy in office bearer positions was filled otherwise the CPG would be unable to continue.

2. The Current Treatment Landscape for People with MS

Professor David Hunt delivered a presentation on the current treatment landscape for MS. The slides for this presentation have been shared with the minute of the meeting. Professor Hunt has agreed to share a summary of his talk with us that will be shared with the membership as soon as possible.

3. Stop MS Appeal and Octopus Clinical Trial

Morna Simpkins, Scotland Director of the MS Society, spoke about the current position of the Octopus clinical trial.

This is an exciting breakthrough as it'll allow us to test potential treatments for progressive MS more quickly and efficiently. It will only be able to do that because its multi-arm, multi-stage design is so innovative, which is exciting in itself. There's never been a multi-stage trial in MS before. And for the first time in MS, a multi-stage approach will be used in combination with a multi-arm approach. This approach will streamline the process providing a structure to test new and repurposed drugs quicker and more cost effectively than a standard trial.

The multi arm multi stage design means we can test multiple drugs at once – and compare them with a single control group. This is what makes it multi-arm.

We can use MRI scans to get an idea of whether a drug looks promising in the brain, months before we could see an effect on disability. If it does, hundreds more people join the existing participants. So what would normally be two consecutive trials can be delivered as one. This is what makes it multi-stage.

We can have a rolling programme, adding new treatments as they're discovered and removing drugs that aren't showing potential.

Octopus is now open and recruiting participants in 12 sites across the UK including Edinburgh and has opened an Australian arm called platypus.

It is hoped that the results for the first drugs being tested in the trial will be available in 2028 or 2029.

4. AOCB

David Torrance thanked Professor Hunt and Morna Simpkins for their presentations.

It was noted that since the last meeting Donald Cameron MSP had stood down as an MSP and also as the co-convener of the CPG. The CPG offered their thanks to Donald for being a long standing member of the CPG and also for his time as Co-Convener.

The Group also noted it's thanks to Liam McArthur MSP for taking up the role as Deputy Convener.

5. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The date and time of the next meeting is to be confirmed.