

The 'Aims Study' update

Report by Dr Mike Mullen, Principal Investigator and Claire Foley, Trial Manager

The AIMS Study is a UK wide clinical trial to assess the role of a commonly known treatment for blood pressure, called Irbesartan, in reducing aortic dilatation in Marfan Syndrome.

This is the largest clinical trial to be undertaken in Marfan Syndrome in the UK with an expectation that 27 Hospitals in the UK will be enrolling patients. Our aim is to recruit 500 patients with Marfan syndrome between the ages of 6-40 years to receive either Irbesartan or placebo (dummy drug) for a maximum of 5 years. We will follow patients on an annual basis with routine Echocardiography.

The study is funded by the British Heart Foundation and Marfan Trust with support from the Marfan Association, and is sponsored by the Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust.



If you are interested in taking part in this study, please contact your local centre for more information about taking part in the study.

Please take a look at our website for further information. We will update the study website regularly and include the contact details of all the hospitals participating once they are up and running.

www.rbht.nhs.uk/aims.

We very much hope to make this study a success and appreciate everyone's support for the trial. Although the outcomes of the study will not be known for 5 years we are confident that the results will be of invaluable benefit to the medical community and further our knowledge regarding the treatment of Marfan patients in the UK and Worldwide.

Changes to Inheritance Tax

In the Chancellor's Budget this year, it was proposed that from April 2012, people who want to leave 10% or more of their estate to charity will receive a 10% reduction in their inheritance tax bill.

If you are already planning to leave part of your estate to charity, then by increasing these donations to at least 10%, both the charities and the other beneficiaries of your will could benefit.

In Memory

Donations received in memory of Ruth Payne, Lucie Woolley-Robinson and Daniel Finkletaub.

Daniel Finkletaub Essay Competition

This year's winner of the Daniel Finkletaub Essay Competition was Talha Sami a 21 year old student whose essay was entitled 'The past, present and future of Marfan Syndrome with a focus on Aortic involvement'.

If you would like a copy of the winning essay, please contact the Charity Administrator on 020 8725 1189 or e-mail, hdydyk@sgul.ac.uk.



Asher Finkletaub-Ageh, Daniel's 7 year old nephew presenting Talha Sami with his prize, a cheque for £250.

CORPORATE COMPANIES

If any of our readers work for a large corporate company who have a Charitable Committee, we would be very grateful if you would nominate the Trust, in order that we may receive a donation.

Companies who have Charitable Committees prefer to receive nominations for awards from employees, as in the majority of cases, they do not respond to unsolicited requests from charities.

For literature contact hdydyk@sgul.ac.uk

Leave a gift in your Will

A gift in your will to the Marfan Trust will help us save lives, by planning vital research far into the future. Together we can bring better treatment and more effective methods of prevention to all those suffering from Marfan syndrome.

Further details can be obtained by requesting a legacy leaflet from the Charity administrator.

TEL: 0208 725 1189
E-MAIL: hdydyk@sgul.ac.uk

SGUL ref: 05054

MarfanTrust News

Autumn/Winter 2011

PATRONS: SIR MAGDI YACOUB FRCS, MR ANTHONY LATTER MA

www.marfantrust.org

Registered Charity No: 328070

Research News

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in Marfan Syndrome

Over the years our patients with Marfan syndrome have reported fatigue symptoms which we cannot explain. Chronic fatigue syndrome is defined as persistent lack of energy without known cause, often associated with other findings such as headaches, joint and muscle aches, poor sleep, and frequent sore throats with large glands in the neck. We do not know if this is more common in Marfan syndrome than in the general population.

In order to investigate this scientifically, we have posted a questionnaire to some of you. These answers will help us to accurately determine what percentage of Marfan syndrome patients have chronic fatigue. We are also asking an unaffected member of the family to fill in a control questionnaire, to provide a population for comparison.

This questionnaire takes only a few minutes to complete. If you have not received a questionnaire and would like to participate, please contact Helga Dydyk by e-mail hdydyk@sgul.ac.uk, or tel: 0208 725 1189. We will be publishing the results of this survey in a future newsletter, together with suggestions on how to cope with symptoms.

We are very grateful to those who have already filled out and returned their questionnaires.

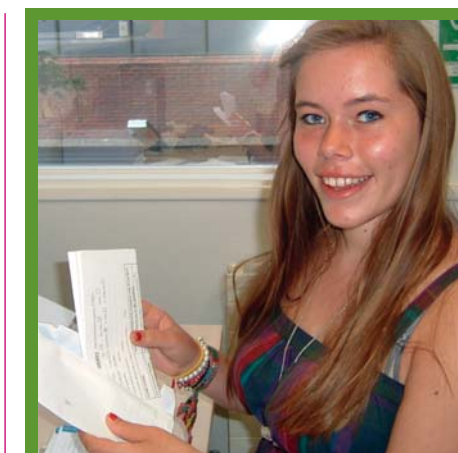
AIMS Medication Trial

Progress is steady, and the first patients were recruited into the trial commencing September 2011. Interested patients aged 6 – 40, with no cardiac surgery, should ask at their next clinic visit if they are suitable. More information is available on the AIMS website, at www.rbht.nhs.uk/aims.

This is a scientifically designed trial of a medication, Irbesartan, which has been shown effective in the Marfan syndrome mouse, and also newborns with severe Marfan syndrome. Seven trials are underway around the world, each

slightly different. Our trial is unique in recruiting patients as old as 40, and in leaving the patient on Atenolol if they are already taking it, while adding the new medication Irbesartan, or placebo (dummy medicine). For this reason, we may at the end of the trial be able to say whether double medication (Atenolol plus Irbesartan) is more effective than just one or the other.

Irbesartan should not be taken



Hatty (Harriet) Cleverdon, a prospective medical student, sending out the questionnaire on Chronic Fatigue syndrome to patients.

during pregnancy, but we are seeking women with Marfan syndrome who have completed their families and are under the age of 40, or who are not planning pregnancy for 3 years. Each patient is being asked to take the medication for at least 3 years, so that aortic measurements on 3 occasions can be used to see if the medication is effective in slowing the rate of aortic widening. Regular progress reports are planned for future newsletters.

Edible Flowers



Thank you to Andy Sole and his family for their generous donation of £271. This money was raised by selling surplus pansies and violas. These plants are edible and Andy's nursery was featured on the BBC 1 "One Show" as one of his customers, who had hired a Glasshouse at his nursery, had been growing these plants as a trial for a new salad pack line for a leading supermarket chain.

Sonalee Laboratory

Dr Gavin Arno, Dr José Aragon-Martin, and medical student Stephanie Harris have studied 78 UK patients with thoracic aortic aneurysm who do not have Marfan syndrome either clinically, or by fibrillin-1 mutation analysis. These patients' samples were screened for mutations in a new gene, ACTA2, which causes familial aortic aneurysms. Serious mutations were found in 3 out of 78 (3.85%) of patients. These patients have been notified and we have offered to screen at-risk family members through saliva kits by post, or at clinic visits here at St George's Hospital, Tooting, London.

This work is being presented at the American Society of Human Genetics in Montreal, October 2011.

Sponsorship of PhD Student

Cardiac Surgeon Miss Marjan Jahangiri is sponsoring a PhD student in our laboratory, named **Dr Nada Abdulkareem** who is trying to answer the question "Do patients with bicuspid aortic valve with aortic aneurysm have a new causative gene?" To do this, she has analysed 35 patients for mutations in fibrillin-1 and TGFBR2 and found no mutations. Recently she has tested the same samples for

mutations in GATA5, a gene recently implicated in congenital structural heart disease. No mutations were found. She will now undertake screening for further genes implicated in heart structure. This work is also to be presented at the American Society of Human Genetics in Montreal, October 2011.

Collaborative Project

Mr David Charteris a consultant ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, specialising in dislocated lenses and detached retinas. His research fellow,

Mr Aman Chandra is working on a collaborative project in our laboratory. He is screening patients presenting at Moorfields Eye Hospital with ectopia lentis (dislocated lens) to see how many actually have Marfan syndrome with fibrillin-1 mutations, and how many have just ectopia lentis with ADAMTSL4 mutations. This important differentiation determines whether patients are at risk of heart disease and so should be followed up with serial echocardiograms, or whether they have isolated dislocated lenses which are inherited in an autosomal recessive fashion like cystic fibrosis, and do not involve

the heart. He is writing up his work as part of his MD project, and for publication.

We are very grateful to the **Marfan Association** for funding laboratory consumables essential to gene mutation analysis in the AIMS medication trial, the bicuspid aortic valve gene screen, and the ectopia lentis gene screen. The Lab personnel are supported by the Marfan Trust and the **Rosetrees Trust** to whom we are extremely grateful for salary and additional consumables funding.

The Brian Adams Memorial Studentship

This summer's Brian Adams Memorial Studentship went to **Mr Nelson Kamali**, now a second year medical student at University College London who has completed DNA extraction from our Marfan syndrome blood samples, reducing our freezer space considerably. He has also set up the analysis for a new gene which can cause aortic aneurysms, called SMAD3, in order to see what percentage of our ascending aortic aneurysms patients who do not have Marfan syndrome, can be explained as having mutations in this new gene.

The Daniel Finkeltaub Memorial Studentship

The Daniel Finkeltaub Memorial Studentship was shared between **Mr Nelson Kamali**, and **Miss Hatty (Harriet) Cleverdon**, prospective medical student.

Presentations

N ABDULKAREEM, G ARNO, J A ARAGON-MARTIN, A H CHILD, M JAHANGIRI. GATA5 Mutation in Patients with Bicuspid Aortic Valve.

G ARNO, J A ARAGON-MARTIN, S HARRIS, M JAHANGIRI, A H CHILD. Mutations in ACTA2 in a British cohort of TAAD patients.

To be presented at American Society of Human Genetics in Montreal. October 2011

Submitted for publication

A CHANDRA, J A ARAGON-MARTIN, L D'CRUZ, D G CHARTERIS, A H CHILD, G ARNO.

Focus on Molecules: ADAMTSL4

Submitted to *Experimental Eye Research*.

The Trust has received £2,108 from the estate of the late Mrs Mavis Patricia Robinson and we are very grateful to her for remembering the Marfan Trust in her will.

Fundraising

Huge thanks to all those who have taken part in fundraising events for the Marfan Trust



Samantha Landa, Suzanne Skinner and Dianne Hardman – Greater London 10k Run

took part in the Greater London 10k Run, on 10 July, raising over **£400** for the Trust.



Suzanne (tall lady) with her friends in Beveridge Park.

Suzanne Scott and Karen Bonner Sponsored Pyjama Walk

Suzanne Scott and Karen Bonner organised a sponsored pyjama walk in Beveridge Park, Kirkcaldy, in July. Suzanne's son has Marfan syndrome and Karen's husband is also affected. 23 people took part in the event raising **£1,837**.



Mrs Jo MacKinnon

Fashion show

Mrs Jo MacKinnon whose daughter, Jorja (in blue top) has Marfan syndrome organised a fashion show. The clothes modeled were by Elizabeth Havens, New Look and M & Co. **£959** was raised from this event.



Barry Landa (in black) and riders preparing for the bike ride

Barry Landa – 19 Mile Cycle Ride

Barry Landa was diagnosed as being marfanoid at a young age. His mother, aunt, uncle and cousin also have the condition and each have had their aortic root replaced. Following surgery, Barry started cycling as a way of gaining cardiovascular exercise. In September, he organised a 19 mile cycle ride from Petts Wood to Pratts Bottom in Kent. 17 riders took part in the event raising **£1,000**. The cycle ride was the first of what Barry hopes will be more events to raise awareness of the condition. Further details can be found on Barry's website www.putyourheartintoit.co.uk/.



Melaine Lane – Skydive

Melaine who has 2 sons with Marfan syndrome, did a sky-dive in April and raised **£815**.

Other Events

Newbury to Bath Bike Ride

Thanks to Glyn Perris, Brendan Paine and Mike Spencer for cycling from Newbury to Bath and raising **£852**.

Well done to Michael Wright and Jonathan Wright for taking part in the BMW Berlin Marathon and raising funds for the Trust. Michael raised **£366.96** and Jonathan has raised **£297**.

Thank you also to Ashley Holden for taking part in the Windsor Half Marathon and raising **£842** and to Team Deansfield for competing in the Wolverhampton Marathon and raising **£445**.

Virgin Money Giving
<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/marfantrust>

Marfan Trust

CHRISTMAS CARDS

are now on sale.
Cards cost £4 for a pack of 10 cards.

Special Offer:
Buy 2 packs
get one pack free
per pack of 10 cards.

If you would like to order any cards, please complete the enclosed order form and return it to the Charity Administrator in the pre-paid envelope. Alternatively, you can order Christmas Cards via our website, www.marfantrust.org

