

Winter 2024

MS Society

your
Advances



Your support,
your impact

• Latest research • Our fight to fix PIP • Messages from the community • What you helped us achieve in 2023

Welcome

Happy New Year and welcome to the first edition of your Advances for 2024.

As I write this, I'm amazed at how much your donations have helped achieve in the last year. From our mega-trial Octopus officially launching, to celebrating 70 years of the MS Society, this has all been thanks to generous supporters like you.

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to show you the impact you've made in the last 12 months. Read what your support helped us achieve in 2023 on page 10. And get the latest on our upcoming research projects on page 5.

For other ways to get involved head to the back page to see what's coming up this year.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of **your Advances** and seeing how your support makes a real difference to people affected by MS.

Once again, thank you for your generosity.


Nick Moberly,
Chief Executive



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Keep in touch

-  supportercare@mssociety.org.uk
-  /MSSociety
-  @mssocietyuk
-  /mssocietyuk

Donate at:

mssociety.org.uk/advances

or by calling **0300 500 8084**

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)



Multiple Sclerosis Society is a registered charity in England and Wales (1139257) and Scotland (SC041990), and a company limited by guarantee (07451571)

Research updates

A year in review

2023 was an exciting year for MS research. From symptom management to trials for new treatments, researchers made incredible progress. And none of this would be possible without people like you.

'Mega-trial' Octopus now open in all four corners of the UK

Octopus is a ground-breaking clinical trial trying to find new treatments for progressive MS. And it's now open for recruitment in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This means people from all over the UK will be able to take part.

The MS Society Tissue Bank turns 25!

Over 800 people with MS have now donated their brain and spinal cord tissue to the Tissue Bank after their death. It's a vital resource for researchers to advance our understanding

of MS and help us find new treatments. Now, the Tissue Bank is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

"I'd like to say a big thank you to people who have signed up and to the families of previous brain donors. The research cannot happen without you." Professor Richard Reynolds, Founder of the Tissue Bank.



From Octopus to Platypus

Only thanks to your support, our successful Octopus launch was possible. Inspired by its success, an extension of our Octopus trial - named Platypus - will now recruit up to 250 participants in Australia. Platypus is funded by MS Western Australia and MS Australia.

"We're delighted to realise this partnership with MS Australia to turn our world-first Octopus trial into an international study." Dr Jacqui Hanley, our joint Head of Research



Find out more, including how to join Octopus, at mssociety.org.uk/octopus

How the UK MS Register fuels research

The UK MS Register is the world's first online database to combine information from people about their MS with NHS data. Since its launch in 2011, over 23,000 members have joined. Read on to find out more about the Register's most recent findings!

How REFUEL-MS is helping to fight fatigue

Nine out of 10 people with MS experience fatigue. But a recent study using the Register found less than a third of people with MS have been offered a treatment for fatigue as part of their routine care.

That's why we're co-funding REFUEL-MS, a new programme that will help people develop new ways of managing their fatigue day to day.

A new study explores the link between MS and depression

Previous research suggested depression could be linked to increased disability later on. But a study using data from the Register found it may be the other way around - depression may be a result of more advanced disability, rather than a cause. This shows us the

importance of prioritising the mental well-being of people with MS.



Dr Benjamin Jacobs, one of the researchers, says: **“Our study shows that depression is common in MS, particularly in people who have a more disabling course. Recognising and treating depression in MS is unlikely to affect the disease itself, but may have an important, positive impact on quality of life.”**

Our free MS Helpline also gives emotional support to anyone affected by MS. We're here Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm except bank holidays:

0808 800 8000.





**Professor
Ruth Dobson**

What's to come in 2024?

We're the largest charitable funder of MS research in the UK. With your help we've been making ground-breaking discoveries since 1953.

Thanks to your support, we're able to fund a wide range of research - from early-stage research in the lab to clinical trials testing new treatments.

This year we have a total of 12 new projects starting. One of these projects is led by Professor Ruth Dobson at Queen Mary University of London. Read on to find out more.

Could changes in DNA during pregnancy affect MS relapses?

People with MS sometimes experience fewer relapses when they become pregnant. Ruth and her team now want to find out why that happens.

DNA is our genetic code. The researchers think there might be changes in the way DNA is used during pregnancy. And they think these changes might affect sections of DNA associated with MS.

How will it help people with MS?

By understanding how pregnancy can sometimes lead to fewer relapses, researchers might be able to better understand why immune attacks happen when someone has MS.

Ruth and her team hope this will help the development of new treatments - so it could help lots of people with MS, not just those that are pregnant.



Find out more about Ruth's project on our website:

mssociety.org.uk/research-pregnancy

Fighting to fix PIP

Last year we told you about our campaign on Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Since then, an incredible 22,524 of you have signed our petition calling for the UK Government to fix the PIP system. Thank you!

Last year marked the tenth anniversary of PIP. But we weren't celebrating. That's why we launched our #10YearsOfPIP campaign in September.

You've told us that 10 years of a broken PIP system has meant a decade of stress, indignity and humiliation. We need a plan to fix PIP once and for all.

In October, we went to the Department for Work and Pensions to hand in the petition. Rob and Shereena, who both live with MS and have their own experience of the PIP system, joined us.

We also held an event in Parliament to meet with MPs and tell them why it's so important they fix PIP now. Over 30 MPs came along and heard from Rob and Shereena about exactly how the PIP process leaves people with MS struggling.

Shereena said of the experience:

"It was important for me to be involved in the MS Society's PIP campaign because it is so important to my independence. Right now, I don't receive enough mobility support to help me get out and about independently, so I have to rely on my husband, friends and family.

Attending the Westminster event as one of the experts in the room made me feel heard. I hope the conversation around the PIP process continues to be had. I'd like to feel like invisible illnesses like MS are more understood."

We haven't finished campaigning on PIP or disability benefits. We'll continue to keep you up to date with the campaign as it progresses.



"Attending the Westminster event as one of the experts in the room made me feel heard. I hope the conversation around the PIP process continues to be had. I'd like to feel like invisible illnesses like MS are more understood."

Shereena Grey




To hear the latest updates,
join our campaigns community
mssociety.org.uk/campaigns

Messages from the community




Last November we wrote to you to share how you can help us to stop MS and fund vital research into myelin repair, turning pioneering ideas in the lab to real-world treatments. We also asked you to share with us why MS research is important to you. Thank you for your generous donations and sharing your thoughts with us.

Here's a snapshot of what you had to say...



My wonderful and amazing son-in-law has MS. He is an incredible man who works so hard helping support his family, never complaining or giving up.



MS research gives me hope!



Funding research into finding treatments for MS will ultimately be transformational for so many people




The logo consists of the word "STOP" in white, uppercase letters inside a dark red speech bubble shape, with the letters "MS" in a large, purple, sans-serif font below it.

STOP
MS

A large red Christmas bauble with a white circular center and a dark blue ribbon at the top. The text is centered in the white circle.

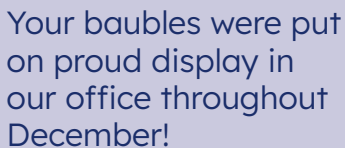
**Every
discovery
helps relieve
those who
suffer**

A large red Christmas bauble with a white circular center and a dark blue ribbon at the top. The text is centered in the white circle.

**I lost a friend to
MS. It is a disease
which needs to be
controlled. This will
only be achieved
by further
research**

A large red Christmas bauble with a white circular center and a dark blue ribbon at the top. The text is centered in the white circle.

**For
future
generations**

A block of text on a light blue background, positioned to the left of the Christmas tree.

Your baubles were put
on proud display in
our office throughout
December!



What you helped us achieve in 2023



Thanks to you, our MS Helpline answered



over 19,000 enquiries, combatting isolation and offering emotional and practical support to the MS Community.



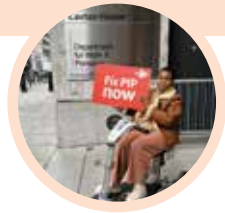
Thanks to your donations and fundraising efforts we've committed **over £1,000,000** towards new research projects - from exciting research in the lab to ground-breaking clinical trials.

Your donations towards our Stop MS Appeal enabled us to launch



Octopus, our revolutionary trial for progressive MS.

You, the MS Community, joined us to campaign and speak up, fighting for the government to fix PIP.



More of you than ever before participated in London Landmarks, Berlin Marathon and a record-breaking London Marathon, which hit the **£1 million mark!**



We started work with a number of small local groups to develop and pilot a cost of living grant scheme. So far we've awarded **39 grants.**



The **100th participant** joined ChariotMS, a trial for people with advanced MS

Every gift helps make work like this possible - thank you!

Introducing the inspirational Impact Award Winners of 2023



In November, we held our annual Volunteer Impact Awards event, hosted by the comedian Ivo Graham. The event celebrated the impact our volunteers make and recognised outstanding individual contributions. And the winners from each category are....

**Supporting and
Empowering
Category**
Jo Newall



**Influencing
Category**
Mike Matulewicz



**Informing
Category**
**Barry and Emma
MacDowell**



**Fundraising
Category**
Gary Rushworth



**Sharing skills
and expertise
Category**
**Siobhan Allister
MacDowell**



**Connecting
Category**
**Volunteers from our
Bradford & District
and Skipton, Craven
& Keighley groups**



Fellow Ambassador and judging panel member, Trishna Bharadia, tells us what she enjoys most about being involved: **"As with every year, it's hearing the stories behind the nominations and learning more about all the wonderful work that volunteers are doing for the MS community. It never fails to put a smile on my face, uplift and inspire me!"**

You can watch the 2023 Impact Awards and find more information about how to nominate someone on our website here:
mssociety.org.uk/impact-awards



Fundraising across the UK



Supporters like you achieved amazing things last year. And we wanted to say a huge thank you! Read just some of the amazing things you've done...

An incredible

164 supporters pledged to leave us a gift in their will.



"I was only 10 when my mum was diagnosed with MS. I've followed the work of the MS Society from the beginning and am absolutely gobsmacked at how far research and treatments have advanced. Although I haven't got a lot of money, I want to include a gift in my will in memory of my mum. And so I can play my part in helping move MS research and resulting treatments forward." Jill



My MS Woof 2023 has raised

£54,965!

263 humans & over 1,000 paws walked a fur-nomenal 13,597 km in October to help stop MS.



Layla, who was diagnosed with MS last year aged just 6, held a Golf Day in Leeds with her Grandad and raised nearly

£3,000.



A team of 11 cyclists journeyed 600km from Loch Ness Scotland to their hometown of Lough Macrory in Northern Ireland over four days. They raised

£22,000

for services in Northern Ireland.



Steven Roberts from Milford Haven, who was diagnosed with MS 18 months ago, raised a combined amount of over

£32,000

from a mix of sponsored walks, breakfasts, skydiving and golf days.

Rosa Bertolino, who lives with progressive MS in a care home in London, threw her own MS Walk and raised over

£3,000.



And a final thank you to anyone who donated in memory of a loved one this year. You raised an amazing

£263,418

in honour of people no longer with us.



Thank you to the hundreds of incredible MS Superstars across the country who've fundraised this year. Whatever you chose to do, you're bringing us closer to our vision – a world free from the effects of MS. You are awesome!

Dates for your diary

Here's what's coming up

19 Feb

The MS Society £4,000 raffle goes live!
Don't miss out on your chance to win our top prize of £4,000!
To take part, visit mssociety.raffleentry.org.uk from 19 February

7 April

London Landmarks Half Marathon and Brighton Marathon

21 April

London Marathon



22- 29 April

MS Awareness Week



28 April

Kiltwalk Glasgow



1 May

The May 50K



5 May

Belfast Marathon



11 May

MS Walk Manchester



25-26 May

Edinburgh Marathon Festival



26 May

World MS Day Big Leap



26 May

Ride London



1 June

MS Walk Birmingham



6 June

Stop MS Annual Lecture



26 June

10 in 10 Challenge
Visit www.10in10.org.uk to sign up



8 Sept

Great North Run



14 Sept

MS Walk London



15 Sept

London to Brighton Cycle



Our Legacy events are held throughout the year. If you want to hear more about upcoming Legacy events, call Sarah on 020 8827 0374 or email legacies@mssociety.org.uk

For more information on these events and to sign up, please visit our website mssociety.org.uk/fundraising

▶ **From showing support today
to changing lives tomorrow** ▶

Our free will-writing service can take you there

If you, like Laurence and his family, want to stop MS, why not take advantage of our free will-writing offer today? An up-to-date will is the best way to make sure your final wishes are clear, and any gift you include will help stop MS for future generations.

**For more information or a free guide to
will-writing, contact Sarah on 020 8827 0374
legacies@mssociety.org.uk or visit
mssociety.org.uk/free-wills**

Yes, I will support the MS Society today

1 About you

Title: _____ First name: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

2

giftaid it

Just date and tick **Yes** – at no extra cost to you we will be able to reclaim 25p in tax on every £1 you donate:

Yes, I would like the MS Society to Gift Aid all donations I have made in the past four years, today, and on all future donations. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed (25p from every £1 you donate) on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Please note Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year and your address is needed to identify you as a UK taxpayer.

Today's date: / / No, I do not qualify for Gift Aid.

3

Set up a regular annual payment by Direct Debit



I would like my payment of £ _____ to be taken each year on the following day of the month 7th 21st

To the Manager: Bank/Building Society

Address:

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Sort code

Bank/Building Society account

Service user number

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society: Please pay the Multiple Sclerosis Society Direct Debits from the account in this Instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with the Multiple Sclerosis Society and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Reference (MS Society use only)

Signature(s)

Date / /

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

**Return this form in the freepost envelope provided or send to MS Society
Lansdowne House, Bumpers Way, Bumpers Farm, Chippenham SN14 6NG**

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