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# movingforward

News for people affected by Life Limiting Illnesses



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI  
LOTTERY FUNDED

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## QUEST FOR CURES AIMS TO SPEED UP SEARCH FOR BRAIN TUMOUR CURE

**As part of the Brain Tumour Charity's A Cure Can't Wait: Our Research Strategy, the Brain Tumour Charity is pleased to announce a new funding scheme that will build international research teams to accelerate discoveries and get them to patients faster.**

Quest for Cures will build international and interdisciplinary research teams to accelerate discoveries and get them to patients faster. Teams will be drawn from institutions all over the world and formed of the most talented and promising researchers.

Quest for Cures will facilitate collaborations between researchers who may not previously have worked together in order to explore new ways of enhancing our understanding of brain tumours. Our aim is to create teams with a broad range of skills across different fields, allowing us to address some of the critical issues that could lead to a step change in the search for cures.

The Brain Tumour Charity Chief Executive, Sarah Lindsell says 'It is only working together globally – by pooling the best ideas and joining forces to break down barriers – that we will speed up progress towards a cure for brain tumours'

Article courtesy of the Brain Tumour Charity

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## **PENSIONS: ARE PEOPLE WITH LIFE-LIMITING ILLNESSES LOSING OUT ON THEIR OWN MONEY**

People affected by life limiting illnesses such as cancer should consider their pension options carefully. Often people can be unaware of the options available to them in releasing money from their pension arrangements. Sometimes people affected by life limiting illnesses think that it is impossible for them to access their pension savings because they are younger than 55 years old.

Pension rules are continually changing. Recent government changes allow people above 55 years old to access their entire pension monies in full lump sums – 25% receivable tax free and 75% receivable subject to income tax. These changes complement the traditional means of receiving pension monies as income through annuities, scheme pension and drawdown.

The Government allows people affected by life limiting illnesses such as cancer to benefit from special rules to access their pension savings. Where somebody's expected life expectancy is less than 12 months, unvested pension monies can be paid out in full tax free whether a person is aged over 55 or not. The rationale behind these special rules is that it would be unfair for somebody to lose out on pension savings they had built up during their lifetime simply because of the misfortune of being diagnosed with a life limiting illness.



Choosing the right pension option is extremely important. Factors to consider in deciding which option to take include: whether you are single or married; whether you have dependents; your health status; your potential inheritance tax situation on death. Making informed decisions regarding pensions can make dramatic impacts on the quality of life for people affected by life limiting illnesses. Enhanced annuities can see people with life limiting illnesses receiving higher incomes than standard annuities. Taking a tax free lump sum from a pension arrangement can help enhance the quality of life for people with life expectancies of less than twelve months.

It is important to seek independent financial advice from a regulated financial adviser to see which pension option is best for you. Regulated independent financial advisers are regulated and authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority. Independent financial advisers will be able to explain the pension options available as well as highlight any potential income tax and inheritance tax implications. Should you wish to discuss your pension options further please feel free to contact Sterling Business Solutions.

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# COULD COMPUTER GAMES HELP PEOPLE WITH MS

Balance problems are common in Multiple Sclerosis. Lesions in the areas of the brain responsible for movement and balance or in the sense areas and systems can cause problems with balance, which can result in walking difficulties and sometimes falls. Step training can be used to improve balance and interactive exercise videogames or 'exergaming' can be used to provide step training at home, so someone doesn't need to travel to a clinic or gym to do the exercises. As well as being more convenient these games can also help keep people motivated and continue with exercises, as they offer greater levels of enjoyment and also provide immediate feedback on how someone is performing. Previous research has used these step training games with older people and found they could improve stepping ability and balance. This current study investigated whether a 12 week step training programme (compared to no step training) could improve balance, stepping and cognition in people with MS.

Fifty people with both relapsing remitting and progressive forms of MS took part in the study. Participants were randomly allocated into one of two groups: intervention or control. Those participants in the intervention group had the step training system installed

at home. The system consisted of two interactive videogames which used a floor mat containing pressure sensitive pads with direction arrows (front, back, left and right) connected to the television via a console. The two games were used to improve accuracy and speed of responses to instructions given on the television screen. Participants in the control group received no intervention but just continued with their usual level of physical activity. Participants were assessed at the start and the end of the 12 week study and were followed up for a further 6 months. In the group that had used the step training system at home the participants at the end of the study had better balance, walked faster and also had more accurate steps when tested, as well as reporting fewer falls than the control group.

The authors of the study conclude that these are promising preliminary results showing that the step training system could be a fun, effective and safe form of exercise for people with MS to use at home to improve their balance and reduce their risk of falls. They are planning further larger studies to confirm that this approach does reduce the number of falls in people with MS.

# talking wills



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Our personal service is designed to help you plan for the future and ensure that your Will or Trust allows your beneficiaries to inherit according to your wishes. It enables you to decide now who controls your financial affairs, or makes decisions about your health and welfare, should the time come when you are no longer able to.

Our service will help you protect the value of your estate, which you have built up over time, and make sure that events, such as divorce or bankruptcy, do not see the value of your estate being unnecessarily diminished.

We use our combined 50 years of Estate Planning experience to make sure you get the very best advice for your future and that of your loved ones.

Our knowledge of Wills, Trusts, Lasting Powers of Attorney and Probate combine proactive advice and a unique understanding of the pitfalls of organising your estate.

## Why Use Talking Wills?

We are members of The Society of Will Writers, an independent body whose primary objectives are advancement, education and ethical standards within the Will Writing Profession. We adhere to their strict codes of conduct, ensuring your interests are kept at the heart of our Business.

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# Are you affected by a life limiting illness?

Living with a life limiting illness is always challenging both for the individuals concerned and their loved ones. Life limiting illnesses can leave people facing uncertainty and challenges they never planned for. SBS is a social enterprise dedicated to providing support, counselling and information to people who are affected by life limiting illnesses. We make no profit regarding the services we offer.

The support SBS offer...

- We offer confidential support by phone or in person
- Meet with one of our counsellors at a time or place convenient for you
- Provide information and support you in accessing services that could benefit you
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- Access to tax-free pension funds under terms available to people with life limiting illnesses
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# NEW HOPE FOR MELANOMA PATIENTS

**After four years of dedicated research PHD student Mitchell Stark has made a remarkable discovery at the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, a facility which has been awarded three grants from the Australian Cancer Research Fund. He has uncovered new markers which will help increase the speed, accuracy and accessibility of tests that monitor the progression of melanoma.**

Mr Stark's study has revealed that elevated levels of microRNAs, which are tiny molecules that regulate the amount of protein in a gene can indicate that the cancer is at risk of spreading.

'They are highly sensitive and specific, and are significantly better than markers currently being used.' says Mr Stark. 'In specimens from Stage IV patients, the new biomarkers confirmed tumour progression in 100% of cases.'

Mr Stark said this is significant because it will allow patients to start treatments before metastatic disease is clinically evident which could greatly improve a patient's chance of survival.

'Patients with Stage III melanoma with spread confined to regional lymph nodes have a five year survival rate at about 50% compared to less than 15% if metastases are widespread.'

In addition to the accuracy another positive is the method in which the testing is done. All that is required from a patient for the markers to be detected is a routine blood test. This will better identify the group of patients that require additional expensive and stressful tests such as CT scans.

Queensland Science Minister Leeanne Enoch said the research represents a significant advance for melanoma patients. 'This is an excellent example



of the world-leading research at QIMR Berghofer which has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of patients in Queensland and around the world.'

QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute has received A\$6.65m in grants from the Australian Cancer Research Fund which has funded technology to progress research in colon, breast, ovarian, prostate, leukaemia, lymphoma and melanoma.





# WHY DO SOME PEOPLE NEVER GET CANCER?

**For more than 80 years Dal Richards has entertained hundreds of thousands of fans as a big band leader in Vancouver. At 97 years old Richards has no plans to tone down his busy schedule and aims to host his 80th consecutive New Year's Eve Party. 'I walk a mile every day. I think my love of music and travel as well as the fun of leading the band and entertaining audiences keeps me healthy,' says Richards. Richards is one of 500 super senior citizens taking part in a new research study to determine why some people live cancer-free into their 80s, 90s and beyond 100. 'Both my younger brother and sister died from cancer,' he says, 'and I'm hopeful that this study will find clues in why people like me don't get cancer.'**

'It appears that some of these amazingly healthy super senior citizens, who are still active and busy at an advanced age, could be genetically protected from cancer causing mutations,' says the study's lead investigator, Dr Angela Brooks-Wilson of the British Columbia Cancer Agency and Simon Fraser University in Canada. 'There is also lots of evidence that lifestyle behaviours such as not smoking, eating a balanced diet, cutting down on alcohol and getting regular exercise play a huge role in not getting cancer.'



The super senior research project was named as the Canadian Cancer Society's first Great Canadian Innovation Grant. Funding comes from a generous group of donors who responded to the Society's appeal to raise C\$200,000 in one week to fund an innovation grant. 'We thought this would be an innovative way to engage Canadians directly in cancer research. We were overwhelmed with the support, and everyone who donated to make this grant possible can feel proud of the opportunity they are creating for the research community,' says Dr Sian Bevan, Director of Research at the Canadian Cancer Society. 'The Great Canadian Innovation Grant is a reflection of the strength we have when we come together from coast to coast to support Canadians touched by cancer.' 'I would like to thank all the generous donor who make this research project possible. With their support, our goal is to provide more people the chance to live longer, healthier lives' says Brooks-Wilson.

## About the super seniors project

Brooks-Wilson and her team painstakingly gathered detailed information from 500 healthy people aged 85 to 109 mainly in the Vancouver area. The senior citizens provided medical, family and lifestyle information, as well as a blood sample, and were tested for physical and mental function. She and co-leader Dr Denise Daley of St Paul's Hospital and UBC will compare the genes of the super senior citizens to those of 100,000 people, some who have cancer and some who don't.

'We already know that many people who live to an incredibly healthy old age actually do have gene sequences that contribute to cancer in the general population, but for some reason they do not develop the disease. We suspect there is something that protects them from getting sick by overriding the cancer-causing genes.' says Brooks-Wilson. The ultimate goal of this research is to identify possible genetic 'override switches' which could eventually lead to the development of anti-cancer drugs. It's possible that such drugs, combined with a healthy lifestyle, could help other people to have a lower risk of getting cancer.

## Another super senior over 100

He's 106 but Dr Robert Wiener isn't ready to slow down. He's on his exercise bike every day, and does 2 exercise classes a week, plus yoga and tai chi. A retired oral surgeon and the oldest resident in his Montreal retirement home, he says his secret to a long, healthy life is a combination of good genes and a healthy lifestyle. 'Laughter is the best medicine' he says. 'Exercise a lot, eat properly and don't stop at the pub too often.'



# More about the Great Canadian Innovation Grant

On November 25th 2014, and the week leading up to Giving Tuesday on December 2nd 2014, Canada's leading cancer charity, the Canadian Cancer Society reached out to Canadians to join together and raise C\$200,000 to establish the Great Canadian Innovation Grant – a high risk, high reward, cancer research project.

# About Canadian Cancer Society Innovation Grants

As competition for grant funding increases, expert review panels become more conservative and risk averse, emphasising feasibility more than innovation. 'The goal of the Innovation grants program is to support unconventional concepts or approaches to address important problems in cancer.' says Dr Bevan. Innovation projects will include elements of creativity, curiosity, investigation, exploration and opportunity. Successful projects may be based on high risk ideas, but will have the potential for high reward (i.e. To significantly increase our understanding of cancer and generate new approaches to combat the disease by introducing novel ideas into use or practice).



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