

MS linked to restricted blood flow in the brain

Scientists have found that around half of patients with a form of multiple sclerosis have a narrowing of the blood vessels in the brain.

By A Daily Telegraph Reporter

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Interim findings from University of Buffalo in New York, America, showed that people with MS were more likely to have narrow blood vessels in the brain that restrict blood flow.

It is not known if this condition, known as chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), is a cause of MS but the researchers said it is 'at least an important association'.

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Some patients who have undergone surgery to widen narrowed blood vessels have reported an improvement in symptoms.

Patients groups were cautious and said there is no proof the finding of narrow blood vessels is a cause of the disease.

The findings, published on the University's website, found 56 per cent of patients with MS, mostly the form which has periods of relapse and remittance, had the narrowing compared to one 22 per cent of healthy people.

The full findings are due to be reported at the American Academy of Neurology meeting in April.

Around 100,000 people in the UK suffer from MS, an auto-immune disease which destroys the fatty insulating sheath of myelin that coats nerve fibres in the brain and spinal cord.

It can cause a range of symptoms from mild balance problems to severe disability, speech and swallowing problems.

Dr Doug Brown, biomedical research manager at the MS Society, said: "These results are intriguing but it is important to remember that although people with MS may show evidence of CCSVI in screening studies, there's no proof as yet that this phenomenon is a cause of MS, nor that treating it would have an effect on MS.

"The next step is to determine what this actually means for MS, and an investigation into whether there's any potential therapeutic benefit from treatment will be pivotal for this novel theory."