

Italian doctor heightens interest in MS cause

Last Updated: Monday, February 8, 2010 | 6:31 PM ET [Comments 32](#) [Recommend 79](#)
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This scan shows blood flowing through veins in the neck of a patient with multiple sclerosis. (CBC)

The Italian doctor whose unconventional thinking on the cause of multiple sclerosis is in North America to drum up interest in testing the idea.

Most MS specialists believe the condition is an autoimmune disease caused by immune cells attacking neurons in the brain and spinal cord, leading to inflammation and damage such as paralysis.

But Prof. Paolo Zamboni's idea is that a narrowing of veins in the neck interferes with blood draining from the brain, allowing iron from the blood to build up in the brain and cause a condition known as chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI).

Asked about skepticism in the medical community, Zamboni, a professor of medicine at the University of Ferrara, told reporters in Hamilton Monday: "My suggestion is to investigate patients as soon as we can, not to simply criticize. Look and confirm the data."

Zamboni was in Hamilton for two days of meetings. On Sunday, researchers from Jordan, Poland and Buffalo presented their preliminary findings, which were not released publicly, on using magnetic resonance imaging to look for vein blockages.

Zamboni believes CCSVI is one of the causative factors in MS, not the only cause. Researchers don't know if CCSVI happens just in MS patients, he noted.

To find out more, a team at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, Ont., hopes to recruit 200 people for a controlled study — 100 with MS and another 100 healthy people. Investigators will also focus on different types of MS, searching for any differences that patients may have in their blocked veins.

There is a debate within the medical community in Canada about whether there is enough evidence to try using surgery to open up the blockages in patients with MS.

"What the techniques would be have got to be defined yet, so this is early days to understand the association of this very interesting observation of Dr. Zamboni," said Dr. David Higgins, president of St. Joseph's Healthcare.

Tuesday is the deadline for researchers who want to apply for funding from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. The society will make \$100,000 available for each of two years, and will decide which proposals to fund in a few months. The other known applicant is the University of British

Columbia.

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[arthura](#) wrote: Posted 2010/02/10

at 11:56 AM ET I am writing from the States. I went to our medical group to ask them what they knew about Dr. Zamboni's CCSVI theory, only to find out that it was the first they had heard about it. By sending them information, much of it in the Canadian press, I got them interested. While skeptical, they agreed to give my wife (diagnosed with MS sixteen years ago) an MRV, the MRI variation that shows one's veins very clearly. The result? Stenosis in both Carotid Veins, one longer, one relatively short.

My approach in this situation was not to make the claim that correcting such a circulatory problem would "cure" MS, particularly in an individual who has been ill for as many years as my wife has. Instead, what I asked was what they would advise an otherwise healthy individual to do, if such a circulatory problem were discovered? Their answer, once they recovered from their surprise that they found exactly what I told them they might? They said they would recommend surgery, simply as a general health issue.

If blood being pumped into the brain cannot easily LEAVE the brain, that inevitably will sharply reduce the amount of blood that can enter the brain. I can think of a host of bad effects of that, the most extreme being death, if the veins completely collapsed. Short of that, wouldn't one want more oxygen going to the brain, rather than less? I'd think so. And if in the process of doing something that would be useful for overall health, in the process a part of the process that causes MS is repaired? To me that seems like a bonus. Giving an MRV takes less than a half hour. Why not take a cohort of a hundred MS patients in every large city and give them scans? The cost would be a fraction of what is being spent on MS medications currently.

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[Skaro's Finest](#) wrote: Posted 2010/02/10

at 9:12 AM ET Dr Young

Why do you say Zamboni is a quack? I've heard some mixed opinions on his ideas but nothing definite. I also don't like the fact that he is going to the media before testing his ideas. That raises a lot of red flags for me. But I'm curious as to why you think he is wrong. Got any good reading on the subject?

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[mctractor](#) wrote: Posted 2010/02/09

at 11:27 PM ET Dr Young calls Zamboni a quack. Ironic that a quack would perform the procedure on the love of his life, his wife. Time for Young to send in his license. Dr. Young and his research team has done SFA for my wife.

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travel65 wrote: Posted 2010/02/09

at 7:03 PM ET Investing an insignificant \$100,000.00 over two years and selecting only 100 MS patients (Buffalo apparently went for 1600 MS sufferers) will lead the MS Society to relinquish this line of research before it really starts. It looks like all of us with MS will have to go to the USA for this treatment should it prove its worth. Zamboni's results, 50% with no relapse in 18 months sound encouraging. A small group, but nonetheless better than the expensive drugs (about 30% success and almost daily shots) for a pharmaceutical product that will not cure MS, only fool it.

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DrYoung wrote: Posted 2010/02/09

at 6:26 PM ET Zamboni is a quack who is causing headaches for the MS Society. This BS is going to redirect money that would be better spent on valid research. MS patients will end up being the worse off for it. It's unfortunate that media reports seem to be dictating the course of medical research in this case. It's kind of like a journalist trying to do heart surgery. Would you choose to be operated on by a journalist?

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