

# MS patients rally to get treatment covered

Last Updated: Friday, April 9, 2010 | 5:52 PM MT [Comments34](#)[Recommend24](#)

[CBC News](#)



*Calgarians with multiple sclerosis staged a rally outside the Foothills hospital Friday asking the province to approve a new procedure to treat the disease. (CBC)* Calgarians suffering from multiple sclerosis rallied at the Foothills hospital Friday, pleading with the provincial government to approve a new treatment already being used in Europe — but not yet available here.

About 40 people gathered at the hospital's MS clinic to raise awareness about "liberation therapy," a surgical technique that involves increasing blood flow to the brain.

MS patient Wendy Sturekl, who went to Poland for the procedure two months ago at a cost of \$10,000, said it stopped her pain and let her enjoy life again.

"I was an old basketball player [but] for years I haven't been able to catch a ball, and the other day, there was a tennis ball in the yard, and I caught it. We played for an hour," she said.

A 2009 study published by the procedure's inventor, Italian vascular surgeon Dr. Paolo Zamboni, suggested it was highly successful in reducing MS symptoms.

It is based on the theory that MS is linked to chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, a condition where blocked veins in the neck or chest prevent blood from draining properly from the brain.

**'I can't believe that the government, the medical people, are so slow to get us fixed.'**

—Carmen Wassill, MS sufferer

Similar to angioplasty, the surgery involves removing the blockage in the veins that carry blood to and from the brain.

But the procedure is still considered experimental by most countries, and has yet to be approved in Alberta or any other Canadian jurisdiction.

Alberta Health Services has said further research is needed before it would consider seeking approval for the treatment.

"Being told you have a progressive illness all your life and all of a sudden hearing that there's something that could stop it, it's just overwhelming," said Carmen Wassill, who has MS.

"I can't believe that the government, the medical people, are so slow to get us fixed."

In November 2009, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada said it would offer grants for

researchers in Canada to try to speed up investigation of the procedure's safety and effectiveness.

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**[AndrewKatz](#) wrote:**Posted 2010/04/10

at 5:30 AM ETGood to hear Calgarians voiced their opinions. Rallies are slated across Canada on May 5, 1:00 pm to do the same. We must be heard!

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**[kazzamm](#) wrote:**Posted 2010/04/10

at 3:02 AM ET"It has now been established beyond any doubt that CCSVI is a definite clinical entity. The Union of International Phlebologists which represents 47 countries, unanimously endorsed this as a new condition at their conference in Monte Carlo in 2009. They decided Professor Zamboni had established "proof of concept" for this new condition. The papers from Zamboni and most recently from Buffalo University in New York have also established that there is a definite association between CCSVI and MS. It has also been established that CCSVI is a congenital disorder and precedes the development of MS. This does not mean that MS is not an autoimmune disorder but the New York data does suggest that those with both MS and CCSVI are more likely to have severe disease. All this makes the further investigation of this area a priority for the MS community."

Dr. Tom Gilhooly, GP

Essential Health Clinic, Glasgow

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**[Portia444Mercury](#) wrote:**Posted 2010/04/10

at 1:47 AM ETMS is an industry. The surgery is simple and requires no fundraising for research. There will be a whole lot of people out of work - and a whole lot of drugs not being sold if this surgery is allowed to proceed in N. America. They have fundraising drives every year, and the money goes for salaries.

I just do not donate money to whatever disease comes to the doorstep - because I don't believe they're doing everything they can.

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**[Portia444Mercury](#) wrote:**Posted 2010/04/10

at 1:44 AM ETI'm sure Helena Guergis' salary of \$208,000 a year, and her upcoming pension of probably \$225,000 a year, plus her husband Rahim Jaffer's pension coming up - not to mention Harper's \$250,000 per year pension, and the pension of all the other fat cats in the government - those who swore they'd never accept pension . . . would go a long way to covering this medical

expense.

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**robmar** wrote: Posted 2010/04/10

at 12:04 AM ETL Deacon's comments are worthy of really being noted and I trust the CBC will use their television medium for showing the worth of this treatment. Maybe the media is the only way the governments will take notice.

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