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## Kuwait to offer controversial MS treatment



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Avis Favaro, CTV News  
Date: Fri, Apr. 9 2010 11:59 AM ET

Kuwait has become the first country in the world to offer a controversial treatment to all its patients with multiple sclerosis who have blocked veins in their necks.

CTV News has confirmed that Kuwait's minister of health has given interventional radiologists in the country the go-ahead to use the state-financed medical system to begin treating patients who have blocked veins and abnormal blood flow in their necks.

According to a theory proposed by University of Ferrara's Dr. Paolo Zamboni in Italy, and first broadcast on CTV's W5 last November, many patients with MS have blocked veins in their necks and chests. He calls the condition CCSVI, or chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency.

He theorizes that the blockage prevents blood from draining properly, sending it back to their brain, a problem that could contribute to the immune response that marks MS.

The theory has generated a lot of interest in Kuwait, which has high rates of MS, particularly among women.

In a telephone interview with CTV, Dr. Tariq Sinan, an interventional radiologist and an associate professor at the Department of Radiology in the Faculty of Medicine at Kuwait University says the health ministry will allow radiologists to begin treating MS patients who have CCSVI, starting next week, as part of an ongoing study.

The Kuwait News Agency KUNA also reported the development, quoting the chairman of the standing committee for co-ordination of medical research at the ministry, Dr. Youssef Al-Nesf, as saying: "The presentation meets the legal, moral and scientific criteria specified by concerned organizations, including the World Health Organization."

The decision is based on research by a team headed by Sinan who studied 12 MS patients in March. All of them had CCSVI and were offered what Zamboni has dubbed the Liberation Treatment. The treatment is a vein version of angioplasty, in which a small balloon is inserted into a blocked vein to force it open.

(No stents were used in the procedures, a practice some doctors around the world have tried and one that Dr. Zamboni does not endorse.)

Sinan says all of the patients saw improvements in their MS symptoms, with some noticing "dramatic" results.

"On one day, on March 3, we did three patients. Two had dramatic improvements on the table and started crying because they couldn't believe what they were feeling," Sinan reported.

He says patients with more severe MS reported fewer improvements, but did notice feeling less stiffness and more energy. Those with less severe disease, reported up to 90 per cent improvements in their fatigue and numbness in their hands and leg.

"In one case, the patient couldn't see from one eye and started to be able to see," Sinan

### CTV News Video

**Canada AM: Avis Favaro probes the MS debate**  
 CTV's medical specialist investigates the debate that has developed between MS patients and doctors over a promising new treatment option in this week's episode of W5.

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### Photos



A file photo of Kuwaiti interventional radiologist Dr. Tariq Sinan (courtesy Dr. Sinan)

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- This week on W5: The Liberation War

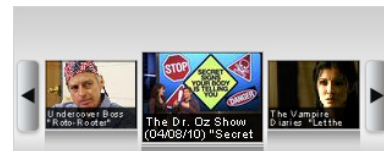


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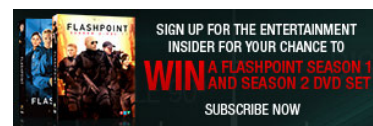
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reported.

Sinan said he's confident the results he saw were not the result of the "placebo effect," a phenomenon in which patients fool themselves into feeling better by an otherwise ineffective treatment.

"If this is a placebo effect and I have MS, I would want this placebo effect," Sinan said.

"It is amazing the kind of improvements the patients say they have. It cannot all be attributed to placebo. Not being able to see and then being able to see, better bladder control, end of foot drop -- that cannot be placebo."

Last week, Dr. Sinan says a group of neurologists petitioned the country's ministry of health to stop the treatments. Their concerns -- shared by other MS specialists around the world -- is that the link between blocked veins and MS has not been proven, and that the treatment could be dangerous. They have called for more studies.

But after review, and submissions from physicians and patients, the decision was to allow the treatments, which will be covered by the state-financed medical system.

The procedure will not be performed to treat MS per se but to treat only "improper blood flow" in the veins.

"So we say this is a vascular problem in the neck. Patients, when you dilate the veins, they feel better. We don't have to talk about MS or the link to MS," said Sinan.

Patients will be warned that the procedure is experimental, and the potential risks of venoplasty will be detailed in consent forms. Patients who agree to treatment will be part of an ongoing study that will be done in cooperation with a Kuwait neurologist.

The team will use ultrasounds and magnetic resonance venograms to scan the neck veins, as well as MRIs to track changes in the brain, including the appearance of MS-related lesions.

Doctors hope to treat 10 Kuwaiti patients a week, beginning next week.

*This Saturday on W5, CTV medical specialist Avis Favaro will investigate the debate that has developed between MS patients and their doctors in part two of her feature report last November. The episode, entitled "The Liberation War," will air on March 10, at 7 p.m. ET. Check local listings for times in your area.*

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- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Paul S</b><br>said                 | I thought Canada was the first world country, shouldn't we be the ones on the leading edge? What is the downside to venoplasty with such a vascular problem as this? Ignore MS altogether, Canada should be treating this along with the rest of the world.  |
| <b>K W</b><br>said                    | Thank God someone was brave enough to be first, and act quickly. We used to be pioneers in the West. I have 3 friends with MS, and as individuals they have different hopes and fears regarding this treatment, which is normal. One has already been tested for CCSVI (positive) and is actively hoping to be treated soon. What price can you put on someone's freedom of mobility, their life, even if it does turn out to be a temporary reprieve? It should be for them to weigh the risk. At least information will start to flow more freely now (and pray that veins do also). |
| <b>Mike G. in Mississauga</b><br>said | I know many people with MS, some with quite severe cases. I hope and pray that this treatment can move forward quickly and with continued positive results. There are so many people around the world watching and the difficulty comes at having to just sit back and wait. I can understand why these Doctors are going ahead with this treatment which seems to hold so much promise. God speed to everyone involved.   |
| <b>MikelnBC</b><br>said               | Hey Paul this goes along with my doctor refusing me a Colonoscopy even though I am 68 years old and have never had one. He told me that the BC Health Care System can't afford it (even though I have symptoms). My wife had one at 55 and the surgeon told her that everyone over 50 should have one. Polyps can be removed before they become cancerous at a small cost or you can wait for the cancer and spend a pile of money on treatments and probably die. Is this all about making our health care system look bad so we can privatize it???                                  |
| <b>Albertaboy111</b><br>said          | And yet Canada refuses to offer the treatment to it's citizens. A cheap and easy procedure, blocked because they need to study it more. Has nothing to do with the millions being spent on MS treatments every year. Ya, thats it...   |
| <b>Guy</b><br>said                    | If this is the cure who will donate money to the MS society, how many people will be out of work, its probably better to let people die then lose jobs in an already inflated population. THIS IS SARCASIM PEOPLE  |

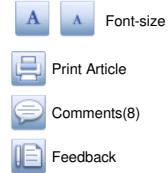
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- Dr. Tariq Sinan's website
- Kuwait News Agency - Kuwait approves MS bypass surgeries for research purposes

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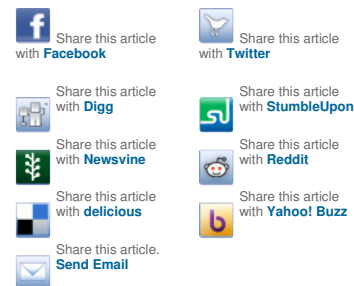
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**Lynn in Hamilton** said  
 This is great news.... no matter where they are doing the procedures now, it is showing the rest of the world that it can work..... WTG!!!! Having grown up with a neighbor that suffers from MS this is awesome.... keep up the good work!!!

**Julie** said  
 I have primary progressive MS and no treatment or medications exist as treatment for this type. I am 66 yrs old and running out of patience and time as I am becoming more and more disabled. It would seem opening veins would be less expensive than just letting people like me become more dependent on Canada's healthcare system. Before MS I was athletic, employed a responsible contributing member to society. My parent and sibling ignore my situ , actually have abandoned me fearing I will cost them money and inconvenience so anything that would give me back some mobility would be a plus.

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If nothing else, this should at least show the PM's integrity. Some will say it took too long. But he clearly took the time to investigate vs. the politically expedient knee-jerk reaction. By calling in the RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner to investigate, he's clearly doing the right thing by Canadians. As a Conservative supporter, I breathe a sigh of relief. This woman, and her husband, have been a stain on what otherwise has been one of the most effective government's in Canadian history. Perhaps now, the government can place its focus where it belongs, instead of the embarrassing circus side-show that Guergis and Jaffer have become.

Frank - Toronto  
 PM confirms Guergis has resigned, won't sit in caucus

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