

## The experimental nature of CCSVI

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**The experimental nature of CCSVI has been highlighted by several recent news items.**

The theory that there is association between narrowing of veins draining blood from the brain was discussed during the recent ECTRIMS meeting in Sweden. ECTRIMS (European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis) is the largest annual international conference devoted to basic and clinical research in multiple sclerosis. A symposium on CCSVI attracted delegates from around the world, including Paolo Zamboni who proposed the theory, and represented a wide range of views.

The range of the discussion demonstrated the range of opinions on this subject held by researchers and also the difficulties in addressing a new area of research. The scientific debate covered fundamental issues such as the definition and detection of CCSVI, disagreements in the interpretation of research results and the nature of the association between CCSVI and MS.

Dr Robert Zivadinov of the University of Buffalo reported on research that showed a higher prevalence of CCSVI amongst people with secondary progressive as opposed to relapsing remitting MS. He said, "Our findings point against CCSVI having a primary causative role in the development of MS. We are showing that CCSVI is connected to the progression of disease, but whether it is a cause of the progression or a consequence, we don't know at this time."

The symposium also discussed surgery to correct CCSVI. With some dissenters, the general feeling was that with the current level of understanding, surgery should only be conducted within the scope of legitimate clinical studies. Speaking to Medscape Medical News, Dr Zamboni expressed concerns about treatment being offered outside research, saying he wants, "a rigorous randomized controlled trial in order to rapidly understand the value of the angioplasty in MS treatment, rather [than] perform treatments on patients out of any scientific and ethical control... It is unethical to charge for an experimental procedure."

These concerns reflect stories in the Canadian press of people experiencing complications from one form of treatment involving the insertion of stents (small, mesh tubes) to keep affected veins open. Although generally considered safe, there have been reports of blood clots forming around the stent and in October one man died in a Costa Rican clinic following attempts to dissolve the clot.

Discussing the sometimes heated disagreements on the internet and in the popular press about the theory and access to treatment, Dr Zamboni said "I'm really determined to root this in science, or at least do my best."

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society in America and the Canadian MS Society have made grants available for research looking into prevalence and detection of CCSVI and the University of Buffalo is conducting a trial of vascular surgery.

[CCSVI in focus at ECTRIMS: New data but still little clarity](#)

[Man dies after MS vein opening](#)

[CCSVI - A to Z of MS](#)

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