

Hadassah a hotbed of medical research

HADASSAH AUSTRALIA
RON FINKEL

Could you ever imagine reading the following headline? 'Israel finds a cure for Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Motor Neurone disease and Alzheimer's.'

I can, because research at Hadassah Hospital has brought us as close as we've ever been to this burgeoning reality.

The lead researcher is neuroimmunologist, Professor Dimitrios Karussis, who heads Hadassah's Multiple Sclerosis Center. The Greek-born scientist and his team have been collaborating with Israeli biotechnology company, BrainStorm Cell Therapeutics. The results are ground-breaking.

Perhaps we are on the cusp of a possibility that a few years ago was considered science fiction.

The excitement follows a number of clinical trials in which patients' stem cells were removed from their bone marrow, cultivated under laboratory conditions and returned by intrathecal injection. In some cases, previously disabled limbs have recovered to a point that was previously unimaginable.

Twenty years ago Malia Litman, a top US lawyer, was diagnosed with MS. By the time she reached Prof Karussis in December 2014, her speech was slurred and she could barely walk.

She began a clinical trial involving four stem cell transfusions. With each transfusion she improved: her energy soared, there was an improvement in her gait, in the clarity of



her speech; and a marked improvement in her balance.

Sixteen years ago she stopped practising law. A few months ago she renewed her license.

"While I get the benefit of the stem cell treatments, I also have this Hadassah cheering squad that gives me hope and makes me believe."

Twenty five years ago, Malia's fate would have been sealed. The conventional thinking was that if you have a disease like progressive multiple sclerosis, there is no pathway back to good health. There was no way to rebuild the myelin, the sheath around the nerves which isolates them and gives them the ability to conduct electrical stimuli very fast.

In 1991, as a young PhD student, Prof Karussis presented his concept of using stem cells to replace the immune system to members of the American Academy of Immunology.

"People laughed at the idea of using stem cells for multiple sclerosis," he recalls.

"This was the first approach then I found another way, because with MS you have not only to stop the immune inflammatory activity, you have to find a way to rebuild the myelin that has been destroyed by the autoimmune reaction.

"If the myelin is destroyed the conduction becomes slower, or is even blocked.

"Depending on the area of the brain that has been affected, the patient faces clinical symptoms like weakness of the muscles, problems with sensations, instability of gait, and loss of vision."

He also faced an ethical dilemma around the use of embryonic stem cells, but he overcame it by using the adult patient's own stem cells sourced from the tiniest fraction of stromal stem cells in the bone marrow. This drastically reduced the likelihood of rejection.

The genius of Prof Karussis is replicated many times over by other medical researchers at Hadassah, which carries out more than half of all hospital research in Israel. Hold on to your hats, because in the years ahead we can expect more headlines to appear that will test the limits of our imagination.

For further information go to www.hadassahaustralia.org

35 Years of service and social connection

Talks at Krygier Centre in May



"Let My People Go" Talk and Slide Show

12:45 Wednesday 3 May

Prof Suzanne Rutland, highly regarded historian, presents a talk and slide show based on her book



"Israel Update" Talk and Discussion

12:45 Wednesday 17 May

Join us for another engaging talk and discussion with Dr Ron Weiser including Yom Ha'azmaut celebrations



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A New President for COA

COA SYDNEY
JULIA GOLDING OAM

COA Sydney held its Annual General Meeting on the 5th of April, which brought with it a change in leadership for the organisation as Dr David Rosenwax AM became the President.

This is not new territory for Dr Rosenwax who was the President of COA from 2006 to 2009. Dr Rosenwax is also committed to the wider community through his work at the Bondi Lions where he has held executive roles and he is the current Hon Treasurer of the B'nai B'rith Syd Einfeld Unit. He also keeps his hand in with dentistry, training as well as championing Dental Implants which he helped introduce to Australia some 35 years ago.

In short, Dr Rosenwax is an unstoppable force, always looking for the next challenge and approaching new ideas with astute and careful reasoning which is backed by a drive to create programs and services which truly benefit their target audience.

At this Annual General Meeting COA also welcomed three new non-executive members to the committee:

Roni Vador has been associated with COA for over 20 years, and in the 1990's was a COA committee member. More recently she was employed by COA as Operations Manager. She retired from her paid work in 2015 but has remained a stalwart supporter of the organisation, volunteering her knowledge and skills whenever required.

Ilona Lee AM has been involved in both the Jewish and general community for nearly 40 years. She worked in the tertiary education sector and health sector since her graduation from university. Most



recently she was President of the Shalom Institute and a Governor of the JCA and has retired from both positions, but she remains the Chair of the Shalom Gamarada Indigenous Scholarship Program.

Ben Politzer has been volunteering in the community for over 40 years. He has been a leader in the Scouting movement, and is currently the district commissioner for Scout groups in the Eastern Suburbs. He also volunteered with B'nai B'rith, and together with wife Shirley Politzer OAM is a foundation member of the Dover Heights Shul. Since he retired from his 40 years as an Executive Manager from the Commonwealth Bank you can find him every Wednesday in the COA centre volunteering as a transport assistant for our members.

Congratulations to all who have joined the committee and we look forward to more innovation and program extension under their guidance.

The Hannah Meyer Project



Be the light in our community

We need more volunteers!

Share the mitzvah of Shabbat and Yom Tovim with Jewish residents in non-denominational nursing homes.

Contact Suzi at COA on 9389 0035

Groups and Families welcome.

Our thanks to all those who are already participating in the project.



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