MS foot drop research study

Do you have multiple sclerosis and suffer from foot drop? Would you like to take part in a research study looking at current treatments? If you answered yes to both these questions, NHS Ayrshire & Arran want to hear from you.

A team of physiotherapists from the Douglas Grant Rehabilitation Centre are investigating current treatments available to people with MS who have a foot drop.

Linda Renfrew, Consultant Physiotherapist in MS, explains: “Foot drop happens when the muscles of the ankle are weak. This can cause the foot to drag, and can cause the person to trip while walking.

“There are two main types of treatment available, and we want to find out the effects of these treatments and how they benefit patients.”

The two main types of treatments available for foot drop are ankle foot orthosis and functional electrical stimulation.

An ankle foot orthosis (AFO) is a plastic splint which goes down the back of the leg and under the foot. It holds the ankle in an L-shape and fits into the shoe, keeping the foot up reducing tripping.

Functional electrical stimulation (FES) is a medical device which stimulates the nerve at the side of the lower part of the leg and contracts the muscle at the outside of the leg to help lift the foot. The timing of the foot lift is triggered by a foot switch placed in the heel of your shoe, so that the muscle is stimulated when your foot is off the ground helping you to lift your foot and reducing tripping.

Linda adds: “This study will look at what effect FES and AFO have on how fast you walk and how much energy you use. It will also look at how these treatments affect your energy levels, your tiredness, your activity, your happiness and how often you fall.

“If you want to help us find the answers to some of these questions and think you might be eligible to take part, please get in touch.”
The team are recruiting people with MS who are known to consultants in the MS Services in NHS Ayrshire & Arran, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, NHS Lothian, NHS Fife and NHS Tayside. The study will last until March 2016.

This study is being funded by the MS Society, and is supported by Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde.

To be eligible for the study patients must:

- have been diagnosed with MS;
- be over 18 years old;
- have persistent foot drop over the last three months due to their MS;
- be able to walk for five minutes at a comfortable pace without stopping; and
- have had little change in their MS over the last three months.

To find out more about how to take part in the study, email linda.renfrew@aapct.scot.nhs.uk or telephone 01294 323 057.

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For further media enquiries about this topic, please contact:

Miriam Porte
Communications Manager
NHS Ayrshire & Arran
University Hospital Crosshouse
Kilmarnock KA2 0BE

Telephone: 01563 826108
Out of hours: 07769 648975

Email: miriam.porte@aaaht.scot.nhs.uk
Website: www.nhsaaa.net

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