



## The City of London Migraine Clinic Newsletter

# APRIL 2011

Happy Easter to all of our readers! Yes, it's that time again when supermarket shelves begin to fill up with tempting chocolate eggs and migraine sufferers the world over begin the debate on chocolate as a trigger. Our Doctor Marcus Lewis separates fact from fiction on the subject in this month's newsletter and we also have some exciting developments in the future identity of the clinic and some activities for all to get involved in.

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### 1. **Chocolate: friend or foe?**

Are you worried that treating yourself to chocolate Easter eggs could lead to an unwanted migraine? A link between cocoa products and migraine headaches will be familiar to many migraine sufferers. It has also been the subject of scientific investigation as far back as 1974. There must be worse ways to contribute to medical research than being asked to eat chocolate! This is exactly what has been asked of migraine-sensitive volunteers by several similar studies which have tried to explore the possibility that chocolate may trigger migraines. Volunteers were given chocolate or an identical chocolate substitute to eat and asked to report on the pattern of their headaches and migraines. The results of these studies seem to show that chocolate is no more likely than a chocolate substitute to trigger migraines or headaches. What should we make of these findings? Should chocolate not be considered a migraine trigger? It is important to recognize that craving for sugary foods can be an early symptom of migraine (the technical term is a "prodromal symptom"; a symptom which can occur hours to days before the onset of migraine headache). A migraine sufferer might respond to such a craving by



eating chocolate only for the migraine to follow. This does not mean that the chocolate triggered the migraine, rather that eating chocolate was a response to a symptom of a migraine which was already starting. Also, for many sufferers, migraines are not triggered by a single trigger factor but rather by several factors which occur close together in time. This might mean that a chocolate bar as a pick-me-up the morning after a night on the town (other triggers: a late night, drinking alcohol) could lead to a migraine developing whereas an Easter egg in the absence of any other triggers could be fine.

For some of you reading this, chocolate may be an obvious trigger for your migraines and I certainly wouldn't advise you to change the dietary habits which work to control your migraines on the basis of this scientific research. For others, you may feel that it gives you the confidence to give yourself a bit of a treat!

## **2. Commissioning Headache Services Event**

In last month's newsletter we explained how we were organising a seminar for Healthcare Commissioners to highlight the problems that headaches cause for the NHS and how services such as ours can help.

We used prescribing data from two local Primary Care Trusts which showed unnecessarily expensive and unsuitable prescribing. This was presented alongside 3 case studies demonstrating further wasted resources, with inappropriate referrals and investigations.

The event was a success and we hope that those who attended took note. Importantly however, an article reviewing the talks was published in the British Medical Journal, meaning that our viewpoint will reach a much larger audience than we ever could have achieved with our lecture.

If you are involved in health service commissioning please get in touch with Heather Sim at the Clinic on 0207 251 3322.

## **3. Daily Mail HRT Article**

We have been inundated with calls since our article was published in the Daily Mail this month. It highlights again to us how many people out there suffer from migraine in silence or with little help from healthcare professionals. This PR is great for these sufferers, to let them know the options available to them and importantly reassure them that they are not alone. It also gives the clinic a boost, and is something that we hope to do more often. Thank you to our patient Treacy Osbourne for sharing her story which struck a chord with so many readers. See the article online at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1370958/Migraine-treatment-A-blob-HRT-gel-answer.html>

## **4. "Big Help for Big Society": How the Budget will help us**

There has been much talk of the Government's latest budget report, but this time around it seems all is positive in the world of small charities. Firstly Gift Aid will be simplified, meaning that for £5,000 of small donations a year, for example from collection tins and buckets, we will not need declarations. Secondly the government will reduce the rate of inheritance tax for those leaving major donations to charities of 10% or more in their Will. As a charity that

has only ever been left one legacy donation, we see this as really encouraging. These changes as well as other small amendments to charity law show that the Government is addressing challenging times in the charitable sector by encouraging people who can afford to, to give more. And that can only be a good thing.

## **5. Rebranding the Clinic**

We are pleased to announce that after 4 lengthy applications for funding, we have now secured funding from 'Awards for All' to rebrand the Clinic and provide new promotional materials. This is a key project to allow us to better communicate our message and expand into the future. We have over the past few years had comments from various sources that our logo and name do not express the work of the clinic clearly enough. One of the major national broadcasting services for example are wary of promoting us due to our 'London-centric' nature, despite being a nationwide service, the name in this situation is holding us back.

This funding is crucial to getting a professional new image for the clinic which will be provided to us by a top consultancy with experience of working with charities and the private sector. The consultancy, due to a personal interest in migraine have been helping advise us for the last two years free of charge, so we have built up a strong understanding of each other. Without funding there is no way that we would have been able to afford such expertise for this big project, and seeing as Awards for All have specified that the money must be used for this purpose, we must make the most of the opportunity. We think it is key to our development and our future aim of self-sustainability, and we hope you do too. We will keep you posted in regard to these exciting developments including our new name and image!

## **6. Sponsored Cycle Challenge**

Thanks to Pearson Cycles we can now confirm a date for our sponsored cycle ride to burn off those Easter eggs! It is to be held on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The cycle travels through picturesque Surrey and Sussex and you can choose between a 75km or 150km route, depending on how brave or fit you feel! More can be found on the website <http://www.pearsoncycles.co.uk/store/content/60/Pearson-150-Sportive/>



We really appreciate their collaboration with us on this event, as they normally run the entire event for their own chosen charity the Royal Marsden, however this year they have kindly allowed us to tag onto the ride so that our supporters can raise money for the clinic. We are told that the event is suitable for a variety of abilities and so we hope many of you will join us.

Please email [rebecca.sterry@migraineclinic.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.sterry@migraineclinic.org.uk) or call 0207 251 3322 to register your interest. There is a cost of £25 to enter. We are setting no minimum fundraising limit and will be grateful for whatever funds you can raise for the clinic to show your appreciation of our valuable service. We recommend Virgin Money Giving for easy sponsorship. It allows you to send out automatic emails to friends and family, avoiding the need for hounding them with forms!

Pearson Cycles est. 1860 is the world's oldest bike shop and offers high quality cycles and equipment from experienced, knowledgeable staff. Go to the store on Sutton High Street or order online for all your cycling needs!

## **7. Alexander Rose Day 15<sup>th</sup> June**

We need volunteers to taking part in the annual Alexander Rose day collection to raise money for the clinic. Alexander Rose is an organisation that helps charities and local community projects across the country to raise funds. The event is held in June every year, and is a nice chance to donate your time to giving something back. All we ask is that you take a collection tin on the streets of London (near the clinic) for us! Please get in touch if you think you can help out for a couple of hours on the 15<sup>th</sup> June.

## **8. Internship for Graduates**

If you or anyone you know has recently graduated and is looking to gain unrivalled work experience, we have a unique opportunity. Working for our small organisation with an international reputation, the six month placement will include fundraising, events management and administration. The position is unpaid but reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed. Please call 0207 251 3322 or email [rebecca.sterry@migraineclinic.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.sterry@migraineclinic.org.uk) for more information.



## **9. IT Mapping Skills Required!**

At the Clinic we feel that collecting data is the key to running a successful organisation. Regularly analysing a variety of information allows us to learn where we need to improve in order to provide a higher quality service, and remain financially stable.

In the past we had software that allowed us to feed in our patient data in spreadsheet form to create a map of where our patients live, giving us a greater idea of who we serve. This however became too expensive for us to justify, hence why we are asking for your help. If you have access to such technology we would really appreciate it if you could get in touch. Please email [rebecca.sterry@migraineclinic.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.sterry@migraineclinic.org.uk). Thank you.

## **10. Research**

**Drug trial for menstrual migraine is now completed.** Thank you to all our volunteers who took part in this six month study taking prevention medication at the prone time. We really appreciated everyone's commitment to coming to see us each month and for

completing the study diaries. We will report on the trial results in a future newsletter, although in multicentre studies like this one, it can take considerable time for the results to be collated and finalised. We do let people know exactly what medication they took as soon as we can. In some clinical studies – called double blind trials - neither the researchers nor the volunteers know what medication is allocated to each individual. This can be either the medication under study, a dummy treatment (placebo) or a comparison medication (e.g. one that is available already). This trial design minimises bias in the study and the possibility of just chance findings rather than real, meaningful ones.

**Menstrual migraine and genetics study.** We are still looking for women who have migraine with their periods (confirmed with three months of diaries). We aim to compare the genetic profile of these women with those lucky enough not to have migraine at all. This study involves coming to the clinic to complete a questionnaire and provide a saliva sample. If you are coming to the Clinic, you may be asked at your visit if you would like to participate. We are very keen to meet women who don't have migraine – we don't get so many of those at our Clinic! So let us know if you have a female partner, friend or colleague who might be able to help.

Contact Alison Frith, Clinical Research Sister [research@migraineclinic.org.uk](mailto:research@migraineclinic.org.uk) or 020 7251 8094 (direct line) to find out more about our genetics project or to register your interest in forthcoming studies. There are new trials in the pipeline and we can let you know when we start recruiting.

## 11. Thank you

**Kafevend.** Those of you visiting the clinic recently will notice a new addition to reception-a hot drinks machine. We think that this is great for those waiting and makes for a more comfortable experience. This is not something we would normally be able to afford, but Kafevend have kindly agreed to supply us with the machine at a considerably reduced price. We have used the money we were awarded as Migraine Clinic of the Year for this purchase. We have a selection of coffees, tea and a number of caffeine free alternatives which seem to be going down well, so thank you Kafevend for our Flavia Machine.



Thank you also to **Carole Jenkins** for taking part in the Bath Half Marathon for the Clinic and **Mrs Austin** who organised a community bring and buy cake sale in aid of the charity. We really appreciate these individual efforts, and wish anyone taking part in fundraising events throughout April the best of luck.