



ME/CFS Australia (Victoria)

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New study links HIV-type disease to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

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<http://quest-news.whereilive.com.au/your-news/story/new-study-links-hiv-type-disease-to-chronic-fatigue-syndrome/>

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service has indefinitely suspended donations from sufferers of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), following research which linked the illness with a little-known-about retrovirus identified in blood samples.

A study has identified possible links between CFS patients and the Xenotropic Murine Leukaemia Virus-related Virus (XMRV), which is a similar human retrovirus to HIV, but is relatively unknown in the medical industry due to its recent discovery in 2006.

The Red Cross has ceased donations until further research is conducted, as this link has not yet been confirmed or tested here in Australia. The Red Cross will review its decision in two years time, once further studies have been conducted into XMRV.

The Whittemore Peterson Institute for Neuro-Immune Disease, who conducted XMRV studies, found 67% of CFS patients' samples tested positive for the retrovirus. XMRV is the third human retrovirus to be discovered, with the first two being HIV and HTLV.

The most documented retrovirus is HIV potentially causing AIDS, but the lesser known HTLV can lead to specific strains of leukaemia and lymphoma. The possible connection between XMRV and CFS could be a huge step forward in understanding the condition which directly affects approximately 180,000 Australians.

Shane Radosevic, 19, has been living with the illness for 8 years and says life has not been the same since he was diagnosed.

"There isn't a thing in day-to-day life that it doesn't affect."

Mr. Radosevic has tried many options to manage the illness including dietary changes and anti-depressive medication, but there are no medically-proven treatments for CFS.

"Nothing really helps and it's more about finding a routine and path to suit your lifestyle."

Mr. Radosevic also said it is easy for people to be sceptical about the illness' existence because sufferers do not look sick and says talking to people about the condition is difficult.

"I don't think it is fully understandable unless the other person has it," said Mr. Radosevic.

The prognosis of CFS is variable from patient to patient, as each person experiences different severities but a CFS/ME Working Group report found that less than 10% of patients return to full-functioning capacity and recovery is especially rare in those who are affected for more than five years.

Correctly diagnosing CFS is a process of elimination that can sometimes take up to twelve months.



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Queensland's Bond University is currently undertaking a three year study into CFS and is hoping to develop a faster diagnosis method.

The project is led by Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Cell Biology Dr Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik, who said she was drawn to research the illness because of its mysterious nature and the ways it is linked to the immune system.

“Chronic Fatigue Syndrome potentially has some kind of immunological dysfunction.”

Dr. Marshall-Gradisnik recently won an award for her ongoing research and contribution to biotechnology, receiving the Women in Technology Biotech Rising Star Award, and said she will continue her research into Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.