



## LIBRA FUNDS WORLD FIRST

**This year an important genetic research project focussing on Aplastic Anaemia (AA) and related blood cancers is being carried out at King's College Hospital in London with the support of The Lions International Blood Research Appeal (LIBRA).**

It is believed the results of this research project will go on to benefit AA patients across the globe by helping medical experts determine the very best treatment paths and to better understand which patients with AA are more likely to go on to develop blood cancers including Acute Myeloid Leukaemia.

AA is a life-threatening condition, characterised by the relatively rapid onset of bone marrow failure. This leads to severe peripheral blood pancytopenia, causing anaemia, life threatening infections and or bleeding. Untreated the condition has a high morbidity and mortality.

For those who recover from AA, there is a real risk of developing Acute Myeloid Leukaemia or Myelodysplastic Syndromes. Between 10- 15% of patients go on to develop one of these severe disorders.

Given King's College Hospital's global dominance in research into this disease, it was recently selected as the site to carry out research on samples obtained from 210 patients with AA, treated throughout Europe as part of a clinical trial.

The trial involved randomisation between standard immunosuppressive treatment along with a drug that stimulates bone marrow stem cells and other haemopoietic cells. The King's team successfully carried out the genetic part of the study on this globally unique sample set.

To complete the research Professor of Haematology Ghulam Mufti, who is leading the study alongside his colleague Professor Judith Marsh, requested £56,000 of funding from LIBRA as we are King's official haematology charity.

LIBRA Trustees agreed to support the project so the Professors and their team can carry out in-depth analysis of the genes of the immune system known as 'HLA types' on all samples. ***continued***



Professor Ghulam Mufti commented: "The detailed analysis will enable us to determine whether specific HLA types are associated with AA and the emergence of malignant clones. It will also reveal how the immune system may or may not deal with such cells when they are present at low levels in the blood.

"Our funding request for £56,000 has been approved by LIBRA Trustees and we are so very grateful to this forward-thinking charity and its wonderful supporters.

"The results from the study will be pivotal in understanding key questions in a disease that carries incredibly significant mortality and morbidity. More importantly, it will also allow novel therapies for this disease as well as Acute Myeloid Leukaemia or Myelodysplastic Syndromes.

"As in previous years, we will acknowledge support of LIBRA in all the publications and presentations arising from this important translational study."

#### **Research aims on this study apart from clinical effectiveness are:**

- 1.** Why does the disease show racial and geographical variation, specifically is it to do with the immune system we are born with?
- 2.** Can we predict who is going to respond to standard immunosuppressive treatment?

- 3.** Can we predict who is likely to develop Acute Myeloid Leukaemia or Myelodysplastic Syndrome after recovering from AA?

- 4.** Why does the disease develop in the first place at the specific age peaks? The disease has two peak age incidences, one in young adults and the other at 60 years of age.

LIBRA Chairman Andrew Lodge added: "We wish the haematology team the very best with this ground-breaking genetic research project. They are leading the way with this research and we hope that the results bring about more positive outcomes for patients with Aplastic Anaemia and those with related blood cancers."



# SPECIAL THANKS TO LIBRA TRUSTEE



## After providing LIBRA with more than thirty years of valuable support, Trustee and Vice Chairman Michael Adams has announced his retirement.

Michael joined Tonbridge Lions Club more than 50 years ago and took up the role of Club President in 1983 until the summer of 1984. It was during his presidential year that he heard about LIBRA and he was keen to get involved.

He contacted LIBRA and offered to provide support as he felt passionate about raising funds for the Haematology Department at King's College Hospital. He was also fascinated to learn more about blood cancers and other blood disorders, and the need for improved treatments for better outcomes.

Michael was welcomed to the team as a Trustee and over the years he has helped to raise funds and generate awareness of our appeals including Acorns to Oaks, Tree of Life, and our current Going for Gold Campaign.

LIBRA Trustee Glyn Upjohn commented: "Outside of his role as LIBRA Trustee, Michael was Lions District Governor for South East England in 1996 through to 1997. I was proud to serve Michael as Region Chairman during that year and found him to be a very conscientious Lion, interested in all aspects of Lionism.

"He took the opportunity to spread the word about LIBRA across the south east and beyond, and his enthusiasm really helped Lions and the general public to engage with our work."

For more than a decade Michael has also been a proactive member of the LIBRA PR and Marketing team. He has helped to develop campaign material,

newsletters, and overseen the update of our website [libralionscharity.org](http://libralionscharity.org)

Michael commented: "Throughout my time as LIBRA Trustee I have learnt so much and I have found it such a rewarding role. I particularly enjoyed many visits to King's. It was fantastic to meet with members of the Haematology Department and to see LIBRA funds being put to good use. Over the years LIBRA Trustees have achieved so much for King's and it has been wonderful to be a part of the team."

In 2018, Olympic athlete Dame Kelly Holmes took up the role of ambassador for LIBRA as she campaigns to raise awareness of blood cancer after losing her mother to myeloma. Michael was delighted when she went on to become the first Honorary Member of Tonbridge Lions Club.



It was during the Tonbridge Lions Club Charter Night in March 2020 that Michael received a Melvin Jones Fellowship Award from Lions Clubs International. Past District Governor David Butler presented Michael with the award to congratulate him for

his outstanding voluntary work and for his support of Lions humanitarian projects including LIBRA.

Looking to the future, Michael said: "My hope is that LIBRA can continue to support the amazing haematology team at King's, providing funds that will assist with research and develop of new life saving treatments for patients."

LIBRA Chairman Andrew Lodge added: "Michael has been a huge asset to LIBRA, a superb Trustee, and Vice Chairman. I have appreciated his support and hard work, helping LIBRA to successfully work alongside the haematology team at King's.

"Thanks to Michael's efforts and initiatives with the LIBRA team we have been able to make substantial donations, support vital research, and the development of treatments that have helped to save many lives. Post-lockdown, we will arrange a dinner for Michael and his wife Ann, which will give us an opportunity to say a huge thank you."

# Why World Cancer Day matters



**To mark World Cancer Day on 4 February, we spoke to Irina Belun-Vieira, Head of Nursing Cancer at King's College London NHS Foundation Trust.**

"Prevalence of cancer increases year-on-year and World Cancer Day

provides us with an opportunity to increase health promotion, as well as raise awareness of cancer signs and symptoms to encourage people to access care early.

"With recent advancements in technology, healthcare is more robust in diagnosing and treating cancer, meaning that people are able to continue

with their normal lives.

"COVID-19 has presented us with an unprecedented situation where nationally no-one knew what the best way was to respond. We have tried to learn from the first wave and have tried to preserve cancer care as much as possible, and where it is safe to do so. COVID-19 presents us and the wider organisation with different challenges every single day.

"To help support outpatients and their families, the team has worked on developing the cancer page on the King's website with many helpful resources, links to videos and pan-London virtual events available to help and support concerns or questions people may have. We all understand it can be a very lonely time for many of our patients and we have kept our support groups running virtually."

## Going For Gold Online

**Throughout lockdown, we have continued to raise funds for our Going for Gold Campaign with a target of £300,000.**



We are halfway to reaching our goal, but we need your help! To keep safe during lockdown we are encouraging you to take fundraising activities online.

 @LIBRACHarity

 LibraCharity

Tel: 01428 656283

There is so much that you can do individually or online with friends to help raise funds! You might like to coordinate an event via a platform such as Zoom or Google Meet, which are free to use.

Simply create your own Virgin Money Giving fundraising page in aid of LIBRA via our website [libralionscharity.org](http://libralionscharity.org) and ask participants to make a suggested donation.

You could arrange a virtual quiz, online book club, games evening, birthday fundraiser, a sponsored challenge, and so much more. All funds raised will benefit the haematology department at King's.



[www.libralionscharity.org](http://www.libralionscharity.org)

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