

NEPHROTIC SYNDROME

- *Is there light at the end of the tunnel?*

Treatment for Nephrotic Syndrome is haphazard and unfortunately often very toxic. Patients and their families are still living in hope that a cure will be found for the disease and now scientists, including Professor Moin Saleem, from the Children's Renal Unit at Bristol Royal Hospital for Children believe this is a realistic aspiration.

Nephrotic Syndrome is a disease in which the highly specialised filter of the kidney breaks down, affecting children and adults with devastating consequences, including infections, blood thrombosis and kidney failure. It affects around 10,000 people in the UK.

In spite of many years of research we don't yet have agreement on its cause or any specific treatments, making it all the more crippling for affected children and families.

Recently, however there have been several exciting advances in genetics and biotechnology that may finally be able to give real hope to patients and researchers.

The underlying issue involves a breakdown of the 'filter' of the kidney, which normally functions to stop blood proteins entering the urine, but allows toxins and waste products to be filtered out. Professor Saleem says, "Excitingly, we are now beginning to understand the cause of the disease at the level of the cells that form the filtration barrier of the kidneys. The cell type at the centre of this is called a podocyte, and this is a highly specialised cell and it is completely unique in the body.

Cutting edge research is underway in the world-leading laboratories at the University of Bristol Children's Renal Unit and the unit is at the forefront of raising awareness and help for this condition. The laboratory has been the first in the world to be able to grow the specialised kidney filtering cells in a dish and has for the last 10 years conducted ground breaking research using this unique resource. The research work is supported by NeST, the Nephrotic Syndrome Trust.

Professor Saleem believes that the need to support this type of research into Nephrotic Syndrome has never been more compelling given that more solid research foundations are now in place which can be built upon. He says that, "Many families have contributed huge amounts of time and enthusiasm to our work and our aim is to ensure that their investments and hopes are repaid with genuine advances in our management of Nephrotic Syndrome."



Normal



Nephrotic syndrome

The Nephrotic Syndrome Trust works to raise awareness of the disease and raise funds for research to find a cure. It also offers a website resource and forum for sufferers and their carers.

To find out more visit:
www.nstrust.co.uk