

# Surprise effect of cancer drug

A MAN who was being treated for cancer says a side-effect of the drug was that it reduced the debilitating symptoms of his ME, a condition he had suffered with for 20 years.

The Malvern man, who did not wish to be named, was receiving treatment for non-Hodgkins lymphoma when he was prescribed Rituximab which, as a side effect, improved the symptoms of his myalgic encephalomyelitis, often called ME.

The condition, sometimes called chronic fatigue syndrome, post-viral fatigue syndrome (PVFS) or chronic fatigue immune dysfunction syndrome (CFIDS) causes severe and debilitating fatigue, painful muscles and joints, disordered sleep and gastric problems.

Poor memory and concentration are also cited and in many cases with onset linked to a viral infection.

Other triggers may include an operation or an accident, although some people experience a slow, insidious onset.

The man, whose cancer treatment finished back in

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2009, underwent two and a half months of chemotherapy during which he was prescribed the drug. He said: "The symptoms improved noticeably. The effect of the drugs (on the ME) lasted three to four weeks, after which I declined back to what was a more normal state for me. It was a short-term effect. I'm hopeful there will be a cure for ME."

However, he acknowledged the drug was very expensive but said he would welcome any research which could isolate what component of the drug alleviated symptoms.

He said: "I know many people who are bed-bound and suffering terribly. I don't know what the effect (of the drug) might be on those people."

Action for ME chief executive Sonya Chowdhury is already calling for a joint approach to a possible UK-based trial of the drug. There is a theory the drug's success may be linked to its effect on

the way the immune system works. A trial was carried out in Norway after improvements were observed in people with ME given the drug. So far no one in the UK is prescribed the drug for ME.

Ian Logan, aged 66 of Martley, is chairman of Worcestershire ME Support Group and has battled the condition for many years. He said: "We're very hopeful this proves to be something that cures the symptoms of ME if not permanently then something which can relieve the symptoms and make life bearable." He says there are 25 per cent of people with ME who are house-bound or bed-bound by the condition who want answers and are in need of a cure.

He was at a meeting in Malvern when the man referred to, a friend of his, walked in after a time away.

Mr Logan said: "We were concerned he may not attend the meetings again then one meeting he walked in, as large as life. We were glad and very surprised to see him. We have seen the benefits first-hand, It was a miracle."

# A model mountaineer

A TEENAGER who set out to be a model mountaineer by completing the Three Welsh Peaks and impressing judges at a national beauty pageant has succeeded in doing both.

Abi Grimshaw, of Colwall, near Malvern, trekked the tallest peaks in Wales to raise £1,403 for the Allambie Orphanage in Vietnam which will go toward the fund-raising total as part of the beauty pageant.

The 15-year-old was also crowned Miss Charity Princess 2013 in the finals of TeenQueenUK 2013.

She will now travel to Vietnam with the Miss Charity Queen to hand over all the money raised – a total of about £13,000 – and help with their charity work.

Alison Grimshaw, Abi's mother, said Abi's father was surprised she had finished the climbing challenge and was proud to announce her win at the pageant.

She said: "Abi was delighted with her win and is now very excited about the trip.

"Some of the things she will be doing are helping the children plant a roof



DOUBLE SUCCESS: Abi Grimshaw, left, with Suzanne Hook, the founder of the Allambie Orphanage in Vietnam.

garden, lay decking for the schoolhouse, decorate the schoolhouse and

accompany the children on their annual trip to the seaside."

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