

Canada okays 'liberation therapy' trials

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Canada will fund clinical trials for a controversial multiple sclerosis treatment that targets blocked neck veins, Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq announced Wednesday.

"Patients and their families have been calling for funding of a clinical trial on a treatment to unblock veins," the minister said in the foyer of the House of Commons.

"Our government had been clear that we are prepared to fund a clinical trial but only when there was sufficient medical [scientific information](#) to support proceeding safely."

She said a scientific working group established by the government last August recommended proceeding with the trials after reviewing seven ongoing studies looking at "chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency" and its link to MS.

The Canadian Institute of Health Research plans to establish terms for the clinical trial. Afterward, the government will launch a call for applications to conduct the trials.

MS is an autoimmune disease that affects the brain and spinal cord, impairing vision and speech and muscle control, leading to tremors, spasms and chronic pain.

Italian researcher Paolo Zamboni theorized in 2008 that it could be reversed by unblocking neck veins using [balloon angioplasty](#).

According to his theory, malformed blood vessels caused increased iron deposits in the brain that triggered the [autoimmune response](#).

Many Canadian [MS patients](#) have sought the so-called "liberation treatment" abroad, as it is not offered in Canada. Some reported vast improvements in their mobility while others experienced little or no alleviation of symptoms.

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