

March 2008



Polio – not just an overseas issue

The British Polio Fellowship calls for improved healthcare provision for people in the UK living with polio and additional funding for research into post polio syndrome (PPS).

Gordon Brown declared in his conference speech on 1st March 2008 that his ambition was to “eradicate from the face of the earth” diseases such as polio and end the avoidable suffering of millions. However, there are nearly 120,000 people in the UK today who contracted polio in the epidemic of the 1950s, many of whom are not receiving adequate health and social care.

Some of these people are now experiencing new symptoms and declining health as a result of post polio syndrome (PPS). PPS is a neurological condition and can lead to increased weakness, fatigue and pain. Very few medical practitioners have been trained in how to diagnose and treat PPS correctly and although there is no known cure the condition can be alleviated with therapies such as physiotherapy. It is currently taking an average of six years for those affected to receive a correct diagnosis and this is not acceptable.

With the recent caution over vaccination in the UK the British Polio Fellowship also calls on the government to ensure that polio immunisation levels are sufficiently high to prevent renewed outbreaks of polio. With increased migration into Europe from countries where the rate of vaccination against polio is known to be low, there is a real danger that polio could return to the UK.

Graham Ball, Chief Executive of the British Polio Fellowship said, “We support our members to lead independent and fulfilling lives and are working to help make new treatments available. A real aim would be to see Polio completely eradicated and obviously vaccination plays a key part in this process”.

Contact

Kat Huxtable
Tel: 07958 701405
Email: kat@cantadora.co.uk

Notes to Editor

The British Polio Fellowship represents the 120,000 people in the UK with polio or post polio syndrome. The Fellowship provides its members with information and personal support as well as social and recreational activities and advice on all types of accessible holidays

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system, sometimes resulting in paralysis. It is transmitted through contaminated food, drinking water, faeces and swimming pool water.

One in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis (usually in the legs). Among those paralysed, 5%–10% die when their breathing muscles become affected