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New centre brings hope to patients with muscle wasting diseases

The official opening of the new Queen Square Centre for Neuromuscular Diseases, one of Europe's first comprehensive clinical and research centres into adult muscle wasting neuromuscular diseases, took place on 10 December 2009. It will bring hope to thousands of patients with disabling and life threatening conditions.

The Centre for Neuromuscular Diseases at The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery (NHNN) and the UCL Institute of Neurology in Central London, will combine excellent patient care with cutting edge scientific research to develop new treatments for patients. More than 5,000 adult patients with muscle wasting conditions such as muscular dystrophy, motor neuron disease and peripheral nerve damage, are assessed and treated at the specialist neurological hospital each year. The NHNN is part of University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

For the first time, clinical and research experts from across University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, University College London and beyond, will be united at a single unit at Queen Square. Although there have been many important genetic and molecular discoveries in these diseases, there are still very few effective treatments to benefit patients.

Professor Michael Hanna, Director of the MRC Centre for Neuromuscular Diseases and consultant neurologist, said:

"It will provide an exciting opportunity to translate basic scientific research into clinical trials involving patients."

"Our ultimate aim is to develop new treatments to help patients with disabling muscle wasting diseases such as muscular dystrophy and motor neurone disease. We will also actively recruit and train the next generation of neuromuscular scientists and clinicians to continue to make progress in the future."

Key areas of research in the new Centre – funded by the Medical Research Council – include the establishment of a unique bio-bank of tissues and cells from neuromuscular patients to aid research, clinical trials and the development of cutting edge MRI scanning to aid diagnosis of nerve and muscle disease.

The building development was funded by The National Hospital Development Foundation, many patients and the support of the Comprehensive Biomedical Research Centre.

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