

From Ross Maclean

(Written in late 2004 – prior to Mr Maclean's passing in February 2005.)

About five years ago, I contracted a very unpleasant disease known as Motor Neuron Disease (MND). Many doctors believe it is one of the worst ailments that can be contracted. Over a period of time, from three months and upwards, the muscles slowly contract and then die, although the mind is unaffected. This results in an immobile body. The disease is terminal.

The University of Queensland has established the Queensland Brain Institute, where highly qualified researchers are working to find cures for MND and allied illnesses. Professor Perry Bartlett, Dr Robyn Wallace and Dr Elizabeth Coulson are conducting research in the area. And while progress is being made, there is yet no answer to the question of how and why this disease strikes. The disease can attack anybody without any logical reason.

My son Jeff and I have decided to commit the Index Group to raising funds to fight MND and to support the research of the Queensland Brain Institute. We are donating substantial funds ourselves, but to make the kind of progress that will deliver real results, the researchers need more assistance.

We invite you, our friends, customers and associates to join us by donating to this very worthwhile cause. I thank all of you with whom I have been associated over the years for your friendship. I have enjoyed a wonderful and interesting life and you have all contributed to it. Please contribute to this appeal to fund MND research so in time, no one else has to suffer from this terrible disease.

With grateful thanks
Ross Maclean

Motor Neuron Disease and the Development of New Therapies

Motor Neuron Disease (MND) results from the steady but inexorable loss of nerve cells that control muscle movement and function (motor neurons). Unfortunately, this loss may not become evident until many nerve cells have died; thus the patient may often undergo rapid deterioration shortly after diagnosis, which ultimately results in death due to loss of the nerve cells that control breathing.

The cause of the majority (>95%) of MND cases is unknown. However, in a small percentage of cases the condition is genetic, i.e. the patient inherits an altered form of a gene, which ultimately leads to the disease. Significantly, there is currently no therapy to reverse the effects of the disease or to prevent its progression. QBI neuroscientists have made several fundamental discoveries that may lead to the development of new treatments for MND:

1. The nervous system is capable of generating new nerve cells, including motor neurons. QBI is working to identify ways of stimulating the processes that boost or replace the number of new nerve cells (neural stem cells) in the brain.

2. QBI neuroscientists have identified substances that can specifically block cell death, and future studies will investigate their effectiveness in blocking the death of motor neurons in animal models.

Together, these two approaches could provide therapy that can both prevent further nerve cell loss and potentially regenerate the nerve cells already lost at the time of diagnosis.

Shortly before losing his own personal battle with MND, Mr Ross Maclean instigated a Fellowship to establish a postdoctoral research position at the Queensland Brain Institute which would accelerate research and discovery into MND. Named in honour of its founder, The Ross Maclean Fellowship has significantly enhanced fundamental research into MND, however ongoing financial support is needed to ensure this vital initiative can continue. I thank you in advance for your generous support.

Professor Perry F. Bartlett, FAA
Director, Queensland Brain Institute

Maclean Family establishes QBI Fellowship to fight Motor Neuron Disease

Although Ross Maclean knew there was little chance he would benefit from new research into MND, that didn't stop the Index Group founder from concentrated efforts during his final years to establish a fund to fight this most debilitating disease.

Before he passed away in 2005, Mr Maclean was instrumental in establishing a Fellowship to study Motor Neuron Disease at the Queensland Brain Institute.

Mr Maclean's company, the Index Group – one of Queensland's top 400 privately owned companies and today headed by his son Jeff Maclean – is committed to continue supporting the Ross Maclean Fellowship for MND Research.

To his enduring credit, Mr Maclean conceived the idea to create a MND Fellowship after meeting with QBI's inaugural Director, Professor Perry F. Bartlett.

Professor Bartlett is an internationally renowned neuroscientist, who has set about to continue his groundbreaking research into the fundamental mechanisms that underpin brain function.

This unique Fellowship is one of the few research positions in Australia dedicated to fundamental research of the underlying neurological factors behind Motor Neuron Disease.

You can help ensure the continuation of focused research into MND by donating to the Queensland Brain Institute, at The University of Queensland.

