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For Immediate Release

Chronically ill given hope by recent discoveries

People with Myalgic Encephalopathy/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) are looking to recent studies in the United States that show a possible link between a newly discovered retrovirus and the illness.

ME/CFS is a debilitating long-term disease that can affect anyone. In New Zealand, it is estimated that there are around 20,000 sufferers. It is thought to afflict around 150,000 in the UK, and over one million in the US.

Investigations by the Whittemore-Peterson Institute have been verified by independent studies performed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) confirming the strong association between a family of murine leukemia viruses (MLV), that includes xenotropic murine leukemia virus-related virus (XMRV), and ME/CFS.

Although this is at the early stages of investigation it does show that ME/CFS is a real physical illness and patients need long-term medical support and assistance from others.

There is currently no cure for the illness and there are difficulties in making a clear diagnosis of the condition. The study by Whittemore-Peterson Institute, NIH and the FDA may lead to the development of both a diagnostic tool and a treatment, potentially using medications already in use today for other conditions.

In the meantime we would encourage people with ME/CFS and their carers to keep in contact with their local support group, their medical professionals and ANZMES.

Associated New Zealand ME Society (ANZMES) serves people with ME/CFS and assists those who are newly diagnosed, as well as helping those who may only suspect they are sufferers.

For further information or comment please contact Heather Wilson the president of ANZMES telephone (03) 471 6169 or email info@anzmes.org.nz.

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