

News

Smell test shown to identify Parkinson's

Woman who sniffed out husband's condition inspired study to develop diagnostic test for disease

By India McTaggart

A PARKINSON'S test has been developed after scientists were able to harness the power of a woman who can sniff out the disease.

The test has been years in the making after researchers at Manchester University learnt that Joy Milne of Perth, Scotland, could smell the condition. The

academics first began to believe Parkinson's might have a discernible smell when Mrs Milne claimed she detected a change in the odour of her husband. Les, six years before he was diagnosed with the condition.

Mrs Milne, 72, said that her husband's smell changed subtly to a "musky" aroma years before any difficulty with movement started to emerge. Mr Milne died in 2015 aged 65.

When researchers conducted tests with Mrs Milne, they found she was able to distinguish people with Parkinson's from people without the condition just by smelling the T-shirts they had worn. She also identified that one T-shirt

from the group of people without the condition smelled like the disease, and eight months later the individual wearing it was diagnosed with Parkinson's.

Now academics at the University of Manchester have made a breakthrough by developing a test that can identify people with the condition by running a cotton bud along the back of the neck.

Researchers can examine the sample to identify molecules linked to the condition to help diagnose whether someone has the disease.

Mrs Milne has a rare condition that gives her a heightened sense of smell. She is now working with scientists around the world to see if she can smell

other diseases including cancer and tuberculosis.

She described her sense of smell as "a curse and a benefit," saying that she can sometimes smell people who have Parkinson's in the supermarket or walking down the street but has been told by medical ethicists she cannot tell them.

"Which GP would accept a man or a woman walking in saying, 'the woman who smells Parkinson's has told me I have it?' Maybe in the future but not now," she added.

While still in the early phases of research, scientists are excited at the prospect of the NHS being able to use a simple test to diagnose Parkinson's.

There is currently no definitive test for the disease, with diagnosis based on a patient's symptoms and medical history.

If the new skin swab is successful outside laboratory conditions, it could be rolled out to achieve faster diagnosis.

Mrs Milne said it was "not acceptable" that people with Parkinson's had such high degrees of neurological damage at the time of diagnosis, adding: "I think it has to be detected far earlier – the same as cancer and diabe-

tes, earlier diagnosis means far more efficient treatment and a better lifestyle for people.

"It has been found that exercise and change of diet can make a phenomenal difference."

She said her husband, a former doctor, was "determined" to find the right researcher to examine the link between odour and Parkinson's and they sought out Dr Tilo Kunath at the University of Edinburgh in 2012.

Dr Kunath teamed up with Prof Perdita Barran to examine Mrs Milne's sense of smell.

The scientists believe that the scent may be caused by a chemical change in skin oil, known as sebum, that is triggered by the disease.

The findings, which have been published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, detail how sebum can be analysed with mass spectrometry – a method which weighs molecules – to identify the disease.

Prof Barran said: "At the moment, there are no cures for Parkinson's, but a confirmatory diagnostic would allow them to get the right treatment that will help to alleviate their symptoms."

NEWS BULLETIN

First mammal emerged alongside the dinosaurs

Mammals evolved 20 million years earlier than previously thought, scientists have discovered, after finding that a small shrew-like creature lived alongside the oldest dinosaurs.

The little animal, named *Brasilodon quadrangularis*, was found in late Triassic era fossil beds in south Brazil, dating from 225 million years ago.

A new study of its teeth by scientists from the Natural History Museum and King's College London has shown the creature could be the first mammal. Scientists look for evidence of "diphyodonty", the phenomenon of milk teeth giving way to adult teeth.

The research is published in the *Journal of Anatomy*.

Rugby star Thomas in 'HIV-spreading' claims

Gareth Thomas, the former British and Irish Lions rugby captain, has said he has been "spat at in the street" and told he should die amid allegations that he is an HIV-spreader.

A High Court case will reportedly hear how Mr Thomas admitted he did not tell a former partner he was HIV positive when starting a relationship, according to documents seen by *The Mail on Sunday*.

The former Welsh rugby star, 48, is being sued by Ian Baum, 59, who claims he only discovered Thomas was HIV-positive when he found his antiviral medication.

Mr Thomas is expected to vigorously contest the allegations.

Exercise can cut breast cancer risk by 40pc

Exercising three times a week could cut the risk of breast cancer by almost 40 per cent, a study suggests.

The research, on more than 130,000 women, found sedentary lifestyles were linked to a far higher risk of the disease, especially in its most deadly forms. Scientists behind the research said it was now clear that activity levels have an impact on the chance of disease, separate to risks caused by other factors, such as excess weight.

The study, in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, found "greater levels of physical activity and less sedentary time are likely to reduce breast cancer risk, with results consistent across breast cancer subtypes".

Police arrest 11 after damage at dairy plant

Eleven eco-protesters were arrested after £80,000 worth of damage was caused to lorries at a dairy plant yesterday.

West Midlands Police say the group forced entry to the Muller Wiseman Dairies plant in Ashmore Lake Way, through perimeter fencing before drilling holes in about 200 tyres.

Four men and seven women, mostly aged in their twenties and the eldest aged 55, could face charges of criminal damage and aggravated trespass.

Chief Supt Ian Parnell, said: "We will always respect people's right to peaceful protest but what we cannot do is stand by and allow wanton criminal damage."

Football is not a religion, judge tells Rangers fan

Football is not a religion merely a lifestyle choice, a judge has ruled.

Although players, such as Pelé and Diego Maradona, have inspired deity-like devotion from football fans, a court has now concluded "it does not constitute a philosophical belief".

Edward McClung insisted he was discriminated against by two firms because he was a die-hard fan of Rangers Football Club.

The 51-year-old of Bonnybridge, near Falkirk, tried to sue energy construction firm Doosan Babcock for £80,000 after he was not rehired after a project in 2019. But Judge Lucy Wiseman ruled that football fandom could not be protected under law.

Increase in state pupils admitted to Cambridge

The University of Cambridge admitted a record proportion of state school pupils this year, adding to concerns that universities are discriminating against private school pupils.

About 72.5 per cent of the 36,000 undergraduates joining the university this term will come from state schools, up from 71.6 per cent last year.

Chris McGovern, the chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, said: "The green light has been given to schools or youngsters that they can under-perform but still gain a place."

Dr Sam Lucy, director of admissions for the Cambridge Colleges, said: "Every student who gets a place at Cambridge thoroughly deserves it."

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Gardener's dream

Jennifer Holmes, from Surrey, enjoys the display of brightly coloured *Gladiolus* at RHS Garden Wisley Flower Show yesterday. The annual event is open for visitors until Sunday.



CHRIS GORMAN/PHS

Barristers' strike will put criminals on streets, MPs told

By Charles Hymas
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

COURT cases are being delayed until 2025 and dangerous criminals released on to the streets as the barristers' strike starts to bite, MPs have been told.

Leaders of the Criminal Bar Association (CBA) cited cases of lengthy trials that had been adjourned without a date for a restart and faced "little chance" of being listed before 2025. They told MPs on the justice committee that judges had already ruled defendants should be released from custody because of the

time they had spent in jail awaiting trial owing to delays in their cases.

Kirsty Brimelow, a part-time circuit judge and vice-chairman of the CBA, said: "What we are going to see happening increasingly is that when defendants' custody time limits finish, they will be let out on bail and we may have on the streets people that we would rather not have on the streets."

The CBA began an indefinite strike this week in protest at the Government's offer of a 15 per cent pay rise in legal aid fees. They are demanding 25 per cent. MoJ figures suggest that for every full

week of the barristers' strike about 1,300 cases including 300 trials will be disrupted in some way. Ms Brimelow told the justice committee a murder trial involving an 18-year-old of previously good character currently in custody had been put back until next year after being listed for September, because there is no-one able to defend him.

Other long-running cases had been adjourned in the hope of restarting. But, citing one, she said: "If it carries on too long, the jury will have to be discharged and there will have to be a retrial. With a case lasting two to three months, there

is little chance that it will be listed before 2025." MPs were also told of a rape case involving an attack in a prison which was adjourned due to the lack of prosecution counsel, while another case – listed for the third time – had to be put back until July 2023.

The CBA laid out terms of a potential peace deal with incoming Justice Secretary Brandon Lewis, if he agreed to backdate the 15 per cent fee increase to cover the backlog of 60,000 cases, rather than limiting it to current and new cases. The MoJ estimates this would cost about £60 million a year.

The CBA, which is not a union but has invited its 2,400 members to voluntarily take strike action, has also called for a long-term, in-depth review of barristers' pay to avoid a repeat of the dispute.

Dominic Raab, justice secretary under Boris Johnson, refused to negotiate, although hinted at the weekend he would offer junior barristers a pay rise but the overall package would remain within the same "financial envelope".

The CBA told MPs it had not had one meeting with Mr Raab to try to resolve the dispute, despite making three appeals for face-to-face talks.

Orkney locals 'disregarded' over huge salmon farm plan

By Daniel Sanderson
SCOTTISH CORRESPONDENT

PLANS to build a huge salmon farm off the coast of a remote Scottish island are set to go ahead despite strong opposition among its 90 residents.

Orkney Islands council officials have urged councillors to approve an application from Cooke Aquaculture for six cages, two miles off the coast of Papa Westray.

Campaigners against the development say it will lead to pollution, harm marine life and wreck unspoiled views from the island. The council received 82 objections – almost one for every islander – and just one in support.

The salmon farm, which the developer claims will be barely visible from the island, will have cages 525 ft in circumference with an overall surface area of 131,500 sq ft. It would have room for 3,850 tons of fish.

Among those to object are the author Amy Liptrot, who was born and grew up in Orkney, and is currently on the island, where the Hollywood remake of her memoir *The Outrun* is being filmed.

"I think that the significant impact of water pollution, noise pollution and changes to the visual character of the area outweigh the economic benefits the development would bring," Ms Liptrot said.

"The easterly view from the Papay school and shop across to Eday, which I wrote about [in] *The Outrun*, is an iconic and beautiful part of life on the island [unspoiled] by industry."

"I am worried that the community of Papay are being disregarded as plans for this farm progress," she said.

Wendy Elves, part of a local campaign group against the plan, called for residents on the island, known as Papay, "to be heard".

"Papay is a unique special isle that is full of soul and creativity with a global following," she said. "It is a diverse and fascinating place which many hold dear to their hearts."

"Well-informed objections are clearly not being taken seriously and are deemed irrelevant by the council."

In a report to Orkney council's planning committee, which will take a decision tomorrow, officers found that "on balance the objections are not sufficient weight to merit refusal".

It said that where "unacceptable impacts" had been identified, steps had been taken to mitigate them.

Joel Richardson, vice-president for public relations at Cooke Aquaculture Scotland, said that only 18 of the objections had come from local residents and that four other fish farms off the coast had not affected tourism.

Space oddity

Nasa's James Webb telescope captures this image of the Tarantula Nebula, 161,000 light years away, including thousands of never-before-seen stars.



NASA

Sewage warning for swimmers at 71 beaches after heavy rain

By Olivia Rudgard
ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

SWIMMERS have been told not to bathe at more than 70 beaches because of sewage warnings following heavy rain.

Figures from the charity Surfers Against Sewage show that 71 beaches around England and Wales were either known to be the site of sewage dumps

or forecast to be affected by them after rain overwhelmed water systems on Monday night. It came as ministers were told to "cut the c-p" by Caroline Lucas, the Green Party MP, who accused the Government of having "utterly failed" to take action to stop "literal s-t" being pumped into rivers and seas. Conservative MPs were among those to suggest that water com-

pany bosses should not be taking their "huge salaries" and bonuses if they cannot show their "house is in order".

George Eustice, the Environment Secretary, insisted the Government was acting on a "scale never seen before" to deal with the challenges posed by storm overflows. Water firms have claimed Ofwat's refusal to approve infrastructure upgrades is behind the problem.