

What is MERGE?

MERGE is a national UK charity founded in 2000. Our office is based in The Gateway, a centre for voluntary organisations in Perth, Scotland. The aims of **MERGE** are:

- To promote, commission and fund rigorous and innovative biomedical **RESEARCH** into the causes and treatment of ME and other related conditions.
- To increase public awareness of ME and its consequences, by providing information and **EDUCATION** for health and social care professionals and the general public, so that people with ME can receive the **SUPPORT** they require.

Considerable progress has been made over the last few years in establishing the charity and in pursuing our aims. We are now engaged in consolidating **MERGE**'s funding to ensure our important work can continue.

Research

As a medical research charity, **MERGE** has commissioned and funded several research projects, the results of which have been published in professional scientific journals, and are summarised on our web site. These include:

- Chronic inflammation and apoptosis in patients with ME, OP poisoning, and Gulf War Syndrome.
- Abnormalities of acetylcholine metabolism in the blood vessels of ME patients.
- Investigation of increased oxidative stress in ME.
- Examination of symptom severity in subgroups of patients with "Chronic Fatigue Syndrome".
- Examination of the evidence for the efficacy of psychological therapies for ME.

We also have a wish-list of projects we would like to fund. (Contact our headquarters for details.)

Information

MERGE aims to influence the medical and social care agendas, and to provide education to healthcare professionals and the public. To this end, we helped with the production of the book "Shattered — Life with ME" by Lynn Michell (Thorsons, 2003), and have produced several major professional documents to date, all of which are available from our web site.

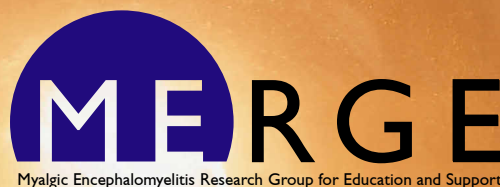
- **Unhelpful Counsel?** — a detailed response to the Chief Medical Officer's report
- **Research into ME/CFS in the UK:** Can the National Research Register inform future policy? — an analysis of ME research funding.
- **Broader Lands and Better Days** — **MERGE**'s report on the 6th International Conference of the AACFS in Washington, 2003.
- **Database of Research Publications** — which contains more than 3,000 research abstracts on ME/CFS from 1987 to the present.
- **New developments in the biology of ME/CFS** — our report on the Royal Society of Edinburgh Workshop in 2004.

Social Care

MERGE aims to progress the social care policy agenda by producing key documents, such as **Who Cares?** our submission on the development of care pathways for the Scottish Executive, and by providing a web-based database of local authority social work provision to assist access to social work services.

The Team

Dr Vance Spence (Chair), Mr Robert McRae (Secretary and Treasurer), Dr Gordon Parish (Consultant and Patron), Mr Roger Jefcoate CBE (Co-founder and Patron), Mrs Betty McRae (Administrator), Dr Neil Abbot (Director of Operations), Dr David Newton (Communications Officer), Dr Gwen Kennedy (Research Fellow), and a core group of volunteers.



Friends of MERGE

Friends of **MERGE** exists to harness volunteer support for our charity, and to secure the core support required to progress our aims. Friends can:

Act as fund-raisers

Fund-raising comes in many forms, but activities include collections, sponsored events, raffles, lunch parties, coffee mornings, Christmas card sales, etc.

Identify funding opportunities

MERGE needs volunteers to identify funding opportunities (from newspapers, the internet, etc.) for all our areas of operation. We also need computer-literate people to obtain electronic copies of vital research and press articles.

Make a regular donation

Standing order forms are available for regular donation. We have separate General, Research, and Social Care accounts, so you can specify your favoured aspect. One-off donations are also gratefully received, and another way of helping is to leave a legacy. We may be able to reclaim tax on your donation through the Gift Aid scheme.

Use a MERGE collection box

Crafted in solid yellow plastic, you can keep a collection box at home for your loose change, and do something to further ME research.

Spread the word

Word-of-mouth is one of the most efficient ways of getting **MERGE**'s work known, especially around ME support groups. You can also download our poster "Energising ME Research" from the web site, and post it up in your local library.

There are two other categories of membership: **Group Friends**, primarily for local ME support groups, and **Corporate Friends**, for larger organisations, such as companies and corporations.

Recent and upcoming events

- Tiffany and Judith Aubrey successfully completed the PowerHouse Cardiff Half Marathon in September. Tiffany is severely affected by ME, and Judith is her mum and fulltime carer. The money raised will benefit both the 25% Group for Severe ME Sufferers and **MERGE**.
- The McKay family hosted sheepdog trials near Inverness in August. Their son is recovering from ME, and the trials raised £1,045 for research into the condition.
- Two experienced runners took up our Bath Half Marathon Golden Bond places in March 2004, and we have runners in the LONDON, Edinburgh and Paris Marathons in the next few months.
- Football Bucket Collections are popular, and visits to St Johnstone and Herts have raised over £700. Have bucket, will travel!
- In 2004, Friends will host the **MERGE** team for a city-wide meeting in Glasgow, and Vance and the team will present our research at the Science Festival, and to healthcare workers in the borders.

Visit our web site regularly to keep up-to-date.

Friends of MERGE application form

(Return to the address below)

Name	_____
Address	_____

Postcode	_____
Telephone	_____
Email	_____
Date	_____