

Health bytes

Heard about the baby seal robot that comforts people with dementia? About the research that could lead to better anti-inflammatory medication for those with arthritis? Want to know more about claiming tax relief on medical expenses online? **Margaret Hawkins** has these healthbytes

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PARO THE THERAPEUTIC ROBOT FOR THOSE WITH DEMENTIA

A cuddly, therapeutic robot in the shape of a white baby seal called Paro is making a difference to dementia patients. Invented by Dr Takanori Shibata, it responds as if it is alive, moving its head and legs and making sounds.

It has been introduced to those with dementia at the

Orchard Day Care Centre in Blackrock, Co Dublin.

It is an advanced, interactive therapeutic robot and registered medical device and is proven to reduce stress, increase socialisation, stimulate interaction and improve relaxation and motivation for people with dementia.

A donation from the Hospital Saturday Fund made the purchase of Paro, the robot, possible, for the Centre.



MS IRELAND HAS NEW WEBSITE

A new website – www.PatientsDeserveBetter.ie – has been launched to help those affected by Multiple Sclerosis to demand quick and better access to new medicine.

An experiential MSunderstood Café also opened in Exchequer Street, Dublin 1 to give customers a taste of the daily challenges and debilitating symptoms faced by people living with MS.

You can view a video showing customer reactions to this pop-up café by logging onto www.PatientsDeserveBetter.ie

SCIENTISTS DISCOVER PROMISING OFF-SWITCH FOR INFLAMMATION

Irish scientists working with others in the UK and the US have made a discovery that could potentially lead to more effective treatment for inflammatory diseases like IBD and osteoarthritis. If all goes well, new anti-inflammatory drugs that switch off the over-active immune cells that contribute to these conditions will be developed.

The 'switch' that puts the brake on these overactive immune cells ('itaconate'

– a molecule derived from glucose) acts as a powerful off-switch for macrophages which cause many inflammatory diseases, they have found.

"It's the most important finding yet," says Professor Luke O'Neill, whose Trinity College team has been exploring metabolic changes in macrophages for the past six years.

It is hoped that the research carried out using both human cells and mice as a model organism will lead to improved treatment for patients with these painful conditions.



WORDS OF LIFE

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

Lamentations ch. 3 v 25.



BLACKROCK CLINIC PERFORMS IRELAND'S FIRST ROBOTIC GASTRIC BYPASS

The first patient to receive a robotic gastric bypass in Ireland had his operation performed by Mr William Robb in November 2017 at the Blackrock Clinic and has now lost over eight stone since starting the bariatric weight loss programme.

Blackrock Clinic invested €2.5m in the da Vinci Xi Surgical Robot. It is a device that gives surgeons enhanced vision as well as more precision and control. The da Vinci Xi is also used for gynaecology, urology, Colorectal and thoracic procedures.