**April 2023**

**Welcome**

News and highlights keeping you informed as we work together to accelerate life-changing treatments for people with progressive MS worldwide

**Amplifying the Voices and Roles of People Affected by MS**

**Meet Martyn Smith, Member of the Alliance Scientific Steering Committee and the People Affected by MS Engagement Coordination Team**

A person with a beard

Description automatically generated with low confidence**Resides**:  Glasgow, Scotland

**When he was diagnosed**: In March of 2009, on his 50thbirthday, Martyn found himself with optic neuritis—pain and foggy vision in his right eye. A neurologist he saw in the UK didn’t know what it was. A lumber puncture came out clear. “There was no sign of anything,” says Martyn, an engineer by trade. His wife, who is a doctor, suggested he go to the Mayo Clinic in the United States. It took three months to get an appointment, but finally, at Christmas time, nine months after his initial symptom, he received the diagnosis of MS.

**How it’s impacted his life**: Martyn told only his wife and children at first. “I kind of just lived with it,” he says. Though his right eye remained foggy, he continued his work as an engineer where he worked all over the world, including Papua New Guinea, Botswana, and Hong Kong. Most recently, he worked on a underground rail project in Sweden. About five years ago, however, he started noticing his walking and balance were unsteady. He ended up retiring last year at age 62. “I could have carried on, but I was tripping and falling all over the place, and my favorite part of the job was going to the sites,” he says. Martyn misses going on walking holidays, and he had to give up his beloved martial arts—he’s a fifth Dan black belt in Aikido and used to teach classes. Now he swims and still walks, albeit with a cane (which he calls a stick). “I do half a kilometer; then I have to stop and rest,” he says. Martyn lives with his wife in an 1893 house in Glasgow, and he can make the trek up the main stairs, but he’s been saying that in a few years they should buy a bungalow by the sea.

**What the Alliance means to him:**When Martyn retired, he became more involved with the MS Society of the UK by joining their research network, which is how he learned about the Alliance for Progressive MS. He appreciates that there are always a few people with MS at meetings to share their perspective on what’s important. “Thousands of people just want an answer,” he says. “My comment is always, ‘how is it really going to help? Is it going to lead to a new treatment or new drug? And what else do we need to do?’ I’m seeking practical answers,” he says.

**What he’d like others to know about the efforts of the Alliance:** That it’s dedicated to progressive MS and that people with MS are invited to contribute. “It’d be great if everybody who has MS knew about all these different research projects happening all over the world; there are so many brilliant scientists working to solve progressive MS,” Martyn says. “People don’t know. I didn’t know for at least 10 years that there were all these people in the background—in America, Europe, the UK, Australia—doing all this research.” He’s glad that it’s going on, but he wishes they’d hurry up a bit.