Interview with Dr. Sadiq, Chief Research Scientist at Tisch MS Research Center of NY

Cade Hildreth: What is your background and why did you choose to focus your career around multiple sclerosis (MS)?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: I’m a medical doctor and I have done internal medicine and neurology. I did a research fellowship in immunology of the nervous system, which led me to focus on multiple sclerosis, which is a disease of the nervous system caused by abnormal immunological responses.

Cade Hildreth: What was your vision for founding the Tisch MS Research Center of New York?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: Our main aim is to find the cause of MS, so we can find a cure.

Cade Hildreth: How do the research and clinical branches of your group work collaboratively to benefit patients?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: The collaboration between the research and clinical branches is seamlessly interwoven, as the research is patient-based and focuses on translational research to deliver the best clinical care possible. Since I direct the practice as well as the research center, there is no leadership friction.
Cade Hildreth: How does the Tisch MS Research Center of New York serve MS patients? (e.g. clinical methods, personal approach, feel of the clinic, cost, etc.)

Dr. Saud Sadiq: The Tisch research center does not directly see patients. All research clinical trials, like our stem cell trial, are overseen by the research center. All other research at the Tisch MS research center is indirectly or directly related to human disease and MS.

Cade Hildreth: What types of patients do you serve? Are there any restrictions on who can access your services?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: Any patient with multiple sclerosis can be seen at our center, the International Multiple Sclerosis Management Practice.

Cade Hildreth: How is the Tisch MS Research Center of New York funded?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: The Tisch Center is funded through private philanthropy, foundations, corporate sponsors, and grants.

Cade Hildreth: Can you explain your recent Phase I stem cell study for MS and the clinical outcomes?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: Our Phase I stem cell study for MS was designed to establish safety of our approach. We unexpectedly have also found that about 70% of our patients have experienced improvement of their established disability, which is very encouraging.

Cade Hildreth: What types of preparations are underway to move this into a Phase II study?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: We have started the initial preparation for the Phase II study, which involves obtaining permission from the FDA and collaborating with another MS center in New York (Cornell).

Cade Hildreth: If successful, how could this approach to treating MS revolutionize the experience of MS patients worldwide?
Dr. Saud Sadiq: If successful, this would be a paradigm shift in the management of MS patients, as it would for the first time make a treatment available that would reverse established disability in patients with MS and related diseases.

Cade Hildreth: What type of investment, funding, or support is needed to launch this Phase II trial?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: For the actual Phase II trial, the cost is $3 million, but we’re also trying to expand our stem cell facilities, and our core experimental laboratory. The cost for this expansion is approximately $10 million.

Cade Hildreth: What are your goals for the Tisch MS Research Center of New York over the next 5-10 years?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: The primary goal is still to find the cause of MS so that we can work towards a cure. Our current success with the stem cell project has also made it possible that in the next 5 years we can bring this kind of therapy to the market.

Cade Hildreth: How can people get in touch with you to support your vision or learn more about the Tisch MS Research Center of New York?

Dr. Saud Sadiq: To learn more about our research and center, you can visit www.tischms.org, or contact our Development department at development@tischms.org.

Cade Hildreth: Thank you for the honor of doing this interview. I applaud the time, effort, and innovation that you put into improving the lives of patients with multiple sclerosis (MS).