

Funding for Crohn's disease research in Edinburgh

A massive £1.8million research grant has been awarded to University of Edinburgh to examine the currently incurable Crohn's disease.

This award will assist experts assess and monitor outcomes for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) that affects 120,000 people in the UK.

Many who have the disease undergo repeated surgery to correct some of the effects. The research will concentrate on mitochondria which give off danger signals that immune cells confuse with bacteria. It will also try to develop a simple non-invasive test to determine whether the inflamed bowel wall is healed.

Funding comes from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust – a US-based charity committed to improving lives.

Helmsley's Crohn's Disease Program aims to find a cure for the disease and to enhance patients' quality of life.

The Helmsley Charitable Trust typically does not accept unsolicited applications and instead identifies research worldwide of exceptionally high standard. This is one of the first projects in Scotland to be funded by Helmsley.

Dr Gwo-Tzer Ho, of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Inflammation Research, who is leading the study, said: "I am honoured to receive this award, which is a reflection on the team's efforts to understand the role of mitochondria in IBD.

We are very hopeful that our work will lead to better tools to predict how the disease affects patients, which could ultimately lead to improvements in their treatment and quality of life.”

Dr Garabet Yeretssian, Director of the Helmsley Charitable Trust’s Crohn’s Disease Program said: “Addressing the unmet medical needs of people with Crohn’s disease is at the centre of our Program’s mission. The team at Edinburgh has a tremendous opportunity to create simple diagnostic tools necessary to transform the standard of care for Crohn’s disease patients.”