

NYSTAGMUS NETWORK (UK) NETLETTER March 2005

NYSTAGMUS NETWORK OPEN DAY AND AGM 2005

Our Open Day this year is at Queen Alexandra College, Court Oak Rd, Harborne, Birmingham, on Saturday 14 May, from 10.30 to 4.30.

Details of the programme and a booking form are published in the March edition of Focus. If you haven't got a copy, or if you have any queries please call me on 01636 627004 or email me at info@nystagmusnet.org

Programme in brief

- **Professor Richard Abadi from Manchester University** will speak on "Research Directions in Nystagmus".
- **Professor Chris Harris of Plymouth University** will update us on his research into the social aspects of nystagmus.
- **Andy Fisher, the Low Vision Aids officer of RNIB Cymru**, will talk about the use and suitability of low vision aids. of Optima Low Vision Services will be displaying a range of their products.
- A children's group will help to plan a new "kids page" for the Nystagmus Network website.

Lunchtime discussion groups

- Parents of children with nystagmus
- The Disability Discrimination Act and work
- Opportunities for fund-raising

Professor Irene Gottlob's team from Leicester University will be present to invite members to participate in their research.

How to get there

By car: The college is 2 miles from the M5 junction 3 and 9 miles from Birmingham Airport. There is adequate parking space.

By train: The college is a ten minute taxi ride (approximately £8) from New Street station and directly on the 103 bus route from Colmore Street near the station. The bus fare is £1 each way.

Refreshments

A buffet lunch is available at a cost of £5.00 per person, £15.00 for a family of any size. Drinks will be available on arrival.

Crèche

There will be a crèche with qualified childcare staff available at a cost of £5.00 per child for the day

Paul White

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Royal National College for the Blind is UK Number One!

The Royal National College for the Blind (RNC), Hereford, a specialist residential college of further education and training for people (16+) who are blind or partially sighted, has been confirmed as number one of its kind in the country. A recent report from education watchdogs Ofsted and ALI, describes RNC as an *“Outstanding college providing high quality education and training where students’ individual needs are very well met”*.

To date this is the best grade profile that has been awarded to a specialist residential college aimed at people with sight loss, across the entire UK.

All Ofsted reports, including that of RNC, can be found on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Contact Cathy Fletcher or Emily Robinson, RNC Marketing Department, 01432 376622, or cf@rncb.ac.uk for further information about the college

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UK RESEARCH NEWS

LONDON: Institute of Child Health/Great Ormond St Hospital

Richard Clement, an NN scientific adviser, is working with ophthalmologist Maria Theodorou on a new approach to congenital nystagmus which may lead to a treatment to improve the visual acuity of children.

They are looking for young volunteers (6 months-4 years) to assess eye movements. It will involve a 30-60 minute visit to Great Ormond Street Hospital for non-invasive eye movement recording. Anyone interested who lives in or near London should email m.theodorou@ich.ucl.ac.uk or r.clement@ich.ucl.ac.uk.

SOUTHAMPTON: Southampton Eye Unit, Tremona Road

Claire Critchley, an Orthoptic Clinical Specialist, is looking for volunteers over 16 with Congenital Idiopathic Nystagmus. The aim of this research is to find out if there is a relationship between the amount of nystagmus and the quality of vision.

The research involves just one visit to have your eye movements measured for approximately two hours. None of the tests hurt and you are welcome to bring a relative or

friend along with you. If you live in or near Southampton and would like to take part or find out more, please contact Claire at claire.critchley@suht.swest.nhs.uk.

PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY: MS and nystagmus

NN scientific adviser Professor Chris Harris is planning some research which may help people who have nystagmus as a result of MS (Multiple Sclerosis). If you'd like to talk to Chris about taking part, please email him at C.M.Harris@plymouth.ac.uk

LEICESTER UNIVERSITY: Possible drug therapy for nystagmus

Finally, NN medical adviser Professor Irene Gottlob needs a few more volunteers over 18 with congenital nystagmus to complete her trials of a possible drug therapy for nystagmus. This study has full ethical approval and is funded by the University Hospital of Leicester and NN. Email Irene at ig15@leicester.ac.uk for more information.

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More on the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), a personal experience of driving with nystagmus and the latest Northwick story for children are some of the items in the March 2005 issue of Focus, our quarterly newsletter. Focus is sent to all members and is available in print, email or on disc.

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Computer Help

If you have problems reading your computer screen because there are just too many words, have a look at a program I found while browsing the net. Click on <ftp://ftp.stepware.com/acerd.exe> or <http://www.stepware.com/acerd.exe>. This will let you download a free trial piece of American software called "Ace Reader" which lets you select the number of words or lines that appear on the screen at any time

Paul White

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The following information was taken from e-access bulletin, a free monthly e-mail newsletter. For further information and to subscribe, please go to:

<http://www.headstar.com/eab>.

Organisations Join to Create Free IT Support Helpline.

A new partnership between two charities looks set to boost the levels of IT support and accessibility advice available to disabled computer users.

AbilityNet (<http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/>), which provides advice, training and assessments of computer needs for disabled people, has joined forces with ITCH Network (<http://www.itcanhelp.org.uk/>) a volunteer programme within the British Computer Society (<http://www.bcs.org/bcs/>), to provide free IT support to disabled people across the UK.

The charities have created a single helpline for computer-related enquiries (0800 269545) and are pooling their resources and expertise to offer a more comprehensive service to end users.

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First Accessible Strategy Game to Launch.

What is claimed to be the first accessible strategy game for blind and vision-impaired people has been launched by the Israeli accessible gaming specialist VIP Games Zone (<http://www.vipgameszone.com/>).

Strategy games are war-games involve the role-playing of opposing armies or forces on a grid-based map. Galaxy Ranger (<http://www.vipgameszone.com/granger/granger.php>) is set in space, and gamers can play against the computer or online with a friend.

The online version includes a "text messenger" feature, allowing gamers to communicate with each other during the game. The messages can be converted to speech using the KeySpeak SAPI voice engine (<http://www.portset.co.uk/keyspeaksapivoice.htm>) or a screen reader.

Galaxy Ranger - which runs on Windows - is the eighth accessible game from VIP Games Zone. "The idea behind all our games is that you don't need the help of a sighted person to play them," says the company's founder Igor Kmiletzof. "We want to make all of the types of games currently available on the mainstream market accessible to blind and visually impaired people. We launched Super Tennis last year, the first accessible online sports game, and now we've launched the first accessible online strategy game."

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Contributions

Please send contributions, ideas or links for the NetLetter to Gill Taylor at gill@taylors.uk.com