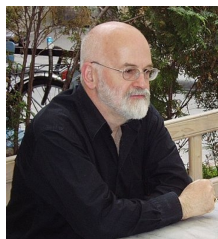


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



Terry Pratchett, the author of the incredible "Discworld" fantasy series
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Alzheimer's Finds Supporter in Author Terry Pratchett

The British novelist urges increased funding for dementia research

The world-famed author delivered a petition to the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown yesterday, urging the government to substantially increase the allotted funds for medical research in various forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's, Parkinson and multiple sclerosis. Pratchett himself has been diagnosed with a rare form of Alzheimer's, which is still in its earliest stages.

He expressed disappointment that degenerative mental conditions such as these ones only benefit from 3 percent of the total medical research funding allotted in the UK yearly, seeing how more than 700,000 citizens suffer from at least one type of such disease. The petition he delivered was signed by more than 100 top scientists in the nation, who were, in turn, backed by some 20,000 people.

"I am appalled that research into Alzheimer's and related diseases, which affect 700,000 people in the UK, currently receives just 3 percent of government medical research funding. I strongly urge the government to increase funding for dementia research as a matter of urgency. I intend to scream and harangue while there is time. The strain on carers and their support is bad enough now - before very long the effects on the health service and society itself, will be unbearable," the paper said.

The Alzheimer's Research Trust, one of the main architects of the new proposal, which Pratchett is a Patron of, said that the government should expect major increases in the incidence of these types of afflictions over the coming years, and that existing cases already take up about 17 billion pounds (\$26 billion) every year.

Neurodegenerative diseases will benefit this fiscal year from some 30 million pounds, according to the Medical Research Council, a publicly-funded institution, and the independent Wellcome Trust. The British executive also vowed to finance the research with some 27 billion pounds, in an attempt to reduce the growing numbers of people suffering from multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and Parkinson.