

Billionaire businessman who took up medical crusade

Profile

Thirty years ago, when mobile phones weighed several kilograms and cost £2,000, two brothers from Stoke-on-Trent saw an opportunity (Oliver Moody writes).

John and Brian Caudwell took eight months to sell their first 26 Motorola handsets. By the mid-Nineties, Phones 4u was a high street giant and one of the country's fastest growing companies. In 2003 it sold 26 phones a minute.

Today John Caudwell, 64, dedicates much of his energy and his £1.5 billion fortune to two medical crusades. One is against autism. Moved by parents' stories, Mr Caudwell has put £9 million towards founding a research centre in

his native Staffordshire. He has pledged to prove that the treatments paid for by his children's charity, which include diets and nutritional supplements on the fringes of conventional science, can improve the lives of autistic people. "This to me is probably the most exciting

mission of my life," he said at a launch event for Caudwell International Children's Centre this year.

The charity, Caudwell Children, helps families dealing with many conditions but is increasingly focused on what Mr Caudwell calls the "avalanche" of autism, with

between three and four thousand patients.

It deploys a range of psychological therapies in combination with food supplements and dietary advice for autism. While it has not been proved that changing what children eat can help with the condition,



John Caudwell, who co-founded Phones4u, has helped to fund Caudwell International Children's Centre, which will open at Keele University later this year. It will be dedicated to autism diagnosis, therapy and research

Mr Caudwell claims that his centre will demonstrate the worth of these treatments to an often sceptical medical establishment.

"The help that we gave always appeared to me from talking to the parents years later to have made a massive difference," he said at the launch event. "But we had no proof. All we had was anecdotal information about the improvements that their child had made.

"I knew we had to do a lot more — a lot, lot more. We had to try and prove that there were positive interventional techniques ... in such a way that it could be adopted on a wide scale. And hence this centre was born."

Mr Caudwell's other mission concerns Lyme disease, a bacterial infection spread through tick bites,

which he claims to have contracted along with ten other members of his family.

He argues that there is a chronic form of the infection that can be inherited, spread through sexual intercourse and linked to a wide range of conditions including multiple sclerosis and chronic fatigue syndrome. This is disputed by Public Health England.

Mr Caudwell has said that his theories were influenced by Dietrich Klinghardt, a naturopath who blames Lyme disease for the recent rise of disorders such as dementia.

In another interview Mr Caudwell called chronic Lyme disease "one of the most dangerous illnesses to mankind today" and accused the authorities of negligence "starting to border on the criminal" for their failure to acknowledge its existence.

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