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April Teleconference: Multiple sclerosis and pain

Presented by **Dr. Neeta Garg**, Assistant Professor of Neurology, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Associate Director, UMass Memorial Health Care MS Center

Dr. Neeta Garg discussed how MS was once considered to be a painless disease. It is now known that as many as 75% of people with MS have experienced pain during the course of the disease.¹



Why people with MS experience pain

- For someone with MS, overactive nerves send pain signals to the brain so that it feels as if every pain is intensified²
- MS pain affects different areas of the body, and it changes in intensity over time²

Ways you can alleviate the pain

- Once you and your doctor work on finding out the nature and source of your pain, you can treat it properly and quickly³
- Remember, you do not have to suffer from pain. Help is available, and there are numerous ways you can control your pain and prevent it from taking over your life
 - To keep pain in perspective, work on developing a positive attitude. It may help you handle the impact of pain³
 - Combine medication with alternative therapies, such as hypnosis, yoga, acupuncture, and meditation, to help improve pain control²
 - Make sure to maintain a healthy diet and exercise regimen; better health may help you handle MS symptoms like pain⁴
- Although MS therapies can't cure your pain symptoms, it is important that you manage your MS by taking your COPAXONE® (glatiramer acetate injection) every day, so you can reduce the frequency of relapses and reduce new damage to your nervous system⁵



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May Teleconference: Options for managing spasticity

Presented by **Dr. Mary D. Hughes**, Medical Director, Augusta MS Center, Associate Professor of Neurology, Medical College of Georgia and **George B.**, MS Peer

Dr. Hughes and **George B.** discussed the importance of treating spasticity with medication, physical therapy, and exercise, and of staying committed to your prescribed treatment plan.

Understanding spasticity

- Spasticity refers to feelings of stiffness, and to a wide range of involuntary muscle spasms

Why treatment is important

- Seeking immediate treatment is critical to preventing painful and disabling frozen or dislocated joints
- Medication and physical therapy may help prevent pain in the hips, knees, ankles, shoulders, and elbows

Exercise can help

- Exercising can increase muscle flexibility and relieve spasticity
- Daily stretching is an excellent start to an exercise program
- Staying focused and committed to the prescribed program may enhance your overall well-being
- Remember to speak to your doctor before starting any exercise program



A partnership in treatment therapy

- Help is available, so consult your doctor and discuss a treatment plan that is specifically tailored to your needs
- Successful treatment requires a true partnership between you and your doctor, nurse, and physical therapist



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June Teleconference: The role of exercise in managing MS

Presented by **Dr. Karla Ledoux-Coton**, Neurological Specialties, University of South Florida Medical Student Faculty Instructor and **Jonathan Y.**, MS Peer

Dr. Ledoux-Coton and Jonathan Y. discussed how exercise has a positive impact on people with MS.

Turn to exercise to help manage your MS symptoms better

- People with MS were once told to limit their physical activity, but, based on clinical research, it has now become clear that they can and should participate in regular exercise⁴
- In one study, people with MS who participated in regular aerobic exercise had better cardiovascular fitness, improved strength, better bladder and bowel functions, less fatigue and depression, and a more positive attitude²
 - When experiencing an MS attack or exacerbation, there is a better foundation for the body to recover and rebuild, once MS symptoms subside⁶



Start off on the right foot

- Remember to consult your physician before engaging in physical activity⁶
- Then, work with a trained professional to find an exercise program that is best suited to you²
- Make sure to work within your abilities and limitations, and to adjust your exercise program when needed²

Choose an exercise that fits your lifestyle

- Swimming and water aerobics are good exercise options that will keep you cool while exercising. Water also provides a natural buoyancy that gives your muscles support and makes movement easier⁶
- Yoga combines breathing with movements that can alternately stimulate or calm the body⁶
- T'ai chi is a form of martial arts. It is a series of movements that resemble ballet in slow motion. It can help improve or maintain strength, flexibility, and balance⁶



UPCOMING TELECONFERENCES

Get connected @ 1-800-823-1880

Our free monthly teleconferences offer advice on a variety of MS issues. We'll even be happy to remind you to call in before the teleconference starts. Just call 1-800-823-1880 today to set up your reminder call. Here's a list of some the upcoming topics:

Getting a full night's rest

July 22 at 8:00 PM ET, 5:00 PM PT
July 23 at 9:00 PM ET, 6:00 PM PT

Glen Ackerman, MD

Clinical Associate Professor,
Department of Neurology and Ophthalmology,
Michigan State University
Neurology Consultants, P.C.
Larissa N., MS Peer

Update from the CMSC

August 26 at 8:00 PM ET, 5:00 PM PT
August 27 at 9:00 PM ET, 6:00 PM PT

June Halper, MSN, ANP, FAAN

MS-certified nurse
Adult Nurse Practitioner
Executive Director of the Gimbel MS Center
Teaneck, NJ
Sue K., MS Peer

The role of MRI today

September 29 at 8:00 PM ET, 5:00 PM PT
September 30 at 9:00 PM ET, 6:00 PM PT

Robert Fox, MD

Staff Neurologist and Medical Director
Mellen Center for Multiple Sclerosis
Cleveland Clinic
Cleveland, OH
Lee G., MS Peer

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References: 1. Pain in multiple sclerosis. National Multiple Sclerosis Society Web site. <http://nationalmssociety.org/download.aspx?id=141>. Accessed June 27, 2008. 2. Turkington C, Hooper KD, Kalb RC, et al. *The A to Z of Multiple Sclerosis*. New York, NY: Checkmark Books; 2005. 3. Pain: the basic facts. National Multiple Sclerosis Society Web site. <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/download.aspx?id=59>. Accessed June 27, 2008. 4. van den Noort S, Holland NJ. *Multiple Sclerosis in Clinical Practice*. New York, NY: Demos Medical Publishing, Inc; 1999. 5. COPAXONE[®] prescribing information, 11/07. Teva Neuroscience, Inc. 6. Exercise as part of everyday life. National Multiple Sclerosis Society Web site. <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/download.aspx?id=74>. Accessed May 19, 2008.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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