Advancements in quality of life for Canadians with MS

Which emerging therapies have the potential to effectively lessen the severity of multiple sclerosis? Does mind-body wellness play a role? How can we learn more about the progression of the disease over time ... and ultimately change the way we diagnose and treat MS?

These are just a few of the questions that your generous support is helping to answer in an effort to improve the quality of life for the 100,000 Canadians who live with MS.

Targeting progressive MS through translational research

Last June, the MS Society of Canada and Centre for Drug Research and Development (CDRD) announced a collaboration to support a translational research project that could lead to the development of new disease-modifying therapies for people living with progressive MS. Following a peer review process by experts in MS and translational research, Dr. Philippe Séguéla, from the Montreal Neurological Institute, was selected to work with CDRD to further develop his progressive MS translational project focused on blocking specific ion channels in the brain. The MS Society has committed over $120,000 for this work.

Cells in the brain called neurons communicate with each other through electrical or chemical signals. Some of these signals occur through the movement of small molecules (ions) between neurons. On the surfaces of the neurons are channels that transport the ions in and out of the cell. A group of the channels called the acid-sensing ion channels (ASICs) have been shown to contribute to neurodegeneration in MS. Researchers have identified an increased presence of ASICs in brain lesions, and have shown that blocking their function is neuroprotective in animals that mimic MS disease. With the help of experts at CDRD, Dr. Séguéla’s research team propose to identify compounds that inhibit ASICs and, hence, can limit neurodegeneration in progressive MS. And your generosity is making this important work possible.

$7+ million-dollar study investigates MS progression

Why do certain people with MS progress in their disease while some do not? And why is the rate of progression faster for some than others? Those are some of the questions that the groundbreaking Canadian MS Progression Cohort study seeks to answer.

The MS Society of Canada, along with Biogen Canada and Brain Canada, are partnering together to contribute to this multi-million dollar initiative. Led by a multidisciplinary team of scientific experts and health professionals across Canada, this study will investigate biological changes that occur during progression, the effects of treatments on disease progression, real-world health outcomes, socioeconomic impacts, and many other factors.

“Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis can be daunting. Symptoms are inconsistent and finding ways to manage the disease can be tricky. A study like this could mean an end to the guessing game,” says Chantal Milne, who was diagnosed with MS in 2012.

The study is the first of its kind in the country, and is only made possible through the donations of people like you. On behalf of the 100,000 people across Canada whose lives can be significantly improved through research of this caliber, we are deeply grateful for your generosity.

Chantal Milne, mother living with MS, pictured here with her daughter.
Drug treatment Ocrevus™ now available in Canada for relapsing–remitting MS

As the recently appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of the MS Society of Canada, I am humbled, honoured and proud to help lead this organization into the future.

In this issue of Progress Report, you’ll read about how the MS Society is on the forefront of research innovation and collaboration, as evidenced by such groundbreaking work as the Canadian MS Progression Cohort study and Dr. Philippe Séguela’s research into the underlying electrochemical causes of progression. Our willingness to think outside of the box and challenge conventional thinking is leading us to support research that is truly groundbreaking and offers enormous possibility for advancement.

It’s natural that we would want to take a leadership role in treating and curing this disease, as it impacts us so deeply: Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. At the same time, we know that any research advancements here in Canada will be shared around the world, to lessen the burden of MS globally as well as locally.

With your help, we are getting closer to uncovering new avenues to fight back against this disease and improve quality of life for all those who live with it.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pamela Valentine
President and Chief Executive Officer
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada
The future of MS in Canada:
by the numbers

2011 VS 2031

Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world — 1 in every 340 Canadians are currently living with MS. But what will the landscape of MS in Canada look like 20 years from now? Using modelling software, MS Society-funded researchers were able to make some startling predictions.

Statistics like these are the reason that your support is so important.
With your help, we can continue our relentless search for new treatments that will improve the quality of life for Canadians living with MS — and reduce the cost both for people living with MS and the health care system as a whole.

Leave a legacy of hope for Canadians with MS

For all those who are living with MS today — and for those who will be diagnosed tomorrow — we hope you will leave a legacy with a bequest to the MS Society of Canada. Your legacy gift will support quality of life for people living with MS and research searching for new treatments.

For more information about legacy giving, please call us at 1-800-268-7582.

World MS Day is May 30

This special time of year brings together people from around the globe in solidarity and commitment to everyone affected by MS. This year’s campaign theme is research, and you can post online using #bringinguscloser to show your support. Join us on World MS Day to honour all those in your life who have been impacted by MS and to accelerate the search for new treatments and a cure.