



2018 Day on the Hill Talking Points: “The Hook”

HOOK—Tell Your Story and Information About MS

About Multiple Sclerosis

- Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world, with an estimated 1 in 340 Canadians living with the disease. While it is most often diagnosed in young adults, aged 15-40, we know that it can also affect younger children and older adults. MS is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults in Canada.
- Women are three times more likely to develop MS than men.
- MS is thought to be an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system – designed to protect against intruders such as viruses and bacteria – attacks tissues in the body. In the case of MS, the tissue that is targeted is myelin. Without myelin the communication between nerve cells is disrupted, and the body does not receive the instructions necessary to perform basic functions like speaking, seeing, walking, and learning.

Symptoms

- MS symptoms depend upon what part or parts of the central nervous system are affected, this includes the brain, spinal cord and optic nerve. For this reason, symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary greatly from person to person and can fluctuate within the same person from one time to the next.
- MS commonly manifests itself as impairment of vision, memory, balance, and mobility.

Everyone’s experience with MS is different

Relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) is characterized by unpredictable but clearly defined periods during which symptoms are apparent. Relapses can last for varying periods (from a few days to several months) and are followed by periods of remission during which many functions return.

Progressive MS occurs in three broad categories: secondary-progressive, primary-progressive, and progressive-relapsing. These have variable degrees of consistency and progression, but all see a worsening of symptoms over time.

What causes MS?

- Despite decades of research, the cause of MS remains a mystery.
- The best current evidence suggests that lifestyle, environmental (i.e. vitamin D), genetic, and biological factors all contribute.
- All of these areas are being actively examined.
- Studies funded by the MS Society ask if certain risk factors such as gender, age, family history or lifestyle habits impact a person’s susceptibility to MS.

Is there hope for a cure?

- Absolutely. Researchers are zeroing in on what causes MS and exploring ways to repair the damage it causes and ways to prevent MS from occurring.
- In fact, in 2016, Ottawa-based researchers made a breakthrough using stem cell therapy to completely eradicate some forms of MS in patients by knocking out and replacing the immune system. It is a difficult therapy that comes with risk but offers hope – and reassurance – that scientific research in regenerative medicine makes a real difference.
- The MS Society of Canada and its related MS Scientific Research Foundation fund the investigation into many aspects of the disease including: progression, therapies, cause/risk factors, nerve damage/repair and symptom management/quality of life.

HOOK—Overview – Policy Priorities

Act Now to Improve #LifeWithMS MS Society of Canada Policy Priorities

Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. Canadian researchers are world leaders in MS research. Now it's time for Canada to lead the world in improving **#LifeWithMS**.

MS impacts all Canadians – not only the affected individuals, but also their families and friends. The unpredictable and often episodic nature of the disease makes it particularly difficult for people affected by MS to maintain an adequate quality of life. People also often face serious barriers in the support programs across all levels of governments. This reality creates immense financial and practical challenges for Canadian families who live with MS.

Policy Priorities

- ✓ **Employment Security: Make Work...Work** by making employment supports and programs more flexible and inclusive by including episodic disability in the definition of disability – to allow people with MS and other episodic disabilities to remain in the workforce.
- ✓ **Income Security: Make Ends Meet** by improving income and disability supports for people with MS who are unable to work or can only work on an intermittent basis.
- ✓ **Make Access a Reality** by implementing federal accessibility legislation that includes episodic in the definition of disability, increasing access to treatments, and investing in comprehensive care and housing.
- ✓ **Accelerating Research** by making health research a priority by continuing to invest in fundamental research and by recognizing the unique role health charities and patients play in the health research ecosystem