

April 18, 2016

Dear Susan,

We are writing to update you on a research study conducted a few years ago at Ryerson University entitled “Dating and Attachment among Single Women with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).” You may have participated in this study, or you may have helped to inform people about the study when we were in the recruitment phase. We want to thank you very much for your help! In addition, you had indicated to us at the start of the study that you wanted to hear about our findings. The study has now been concluded and we are writing to provide you some of our key findings.

As a reminder, our study examined the dating experiences of single women living with multiple sclerosis (MS). We had two separate parts to the study. In Part 1, 99 single women completed a survey about how MS impacted their dating experiences. In Part 2, 12 single women were interviewed by telephone about their experiences of dating while living with MS.

Findings for Part 1:

We found that dating experiences were similar across all ages of women in the study. After looking at the survey answers, we saw that women were more likely to have worse dating experiences and barriers to dating **if they also:**

- Had more disability related to MS
- Had MS for a longer period of time
- Had more anxiety about relationships
- Had more concerns about their ability to attract dating partners

Findings for Part 2:

After collecting the information from the telephone interviews, we looked to see if the dating experiences were the same or different for younger compared to older women. Interestingly, we found that older and younger women experienced similar issues. In the interviews, women talked about the following kinds of experiences in their dating:

- Barriers to dating (like physical barriers in their environment, or negative stereotypes about MS from the people they dated)

- Needing to have some helpful coping strategies such as self-acceptance or self-protective dating behaviours
- Having some concerns about how and when to tell a dating partner about a diagnosis of MS.

Conclusions and Future Directions:

This study shows it is important to continue researching the impact of MS on dating as well as looking into possible ways to help support women living with MS who are dating. We are currently working on a publication of the qualitative study findings.

The full Dissertation will be available online through the Library Archives of Canada:

Blackmore, D. E. (2015). *Dating and attachment among single women with multiple sclerosis*.
Doctoral Dissertation, Ryerson University, Toronto, ON. Supervisor: Dr. Tae Hart.

Thank you for your interest in our research study.

Kind regards,

Dr. Danielle Blackmore, C. Psych. Supervised Practice.

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