

Multiple Sclerosis: Hope Through Research

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Introduction

Although multiple sclerosis (MS) was first diagnosed in 1849, the earliest known description of a person with possible MS dates from fourteenth century Holland. An unpredictable disease of the central nervous system, MS can range from relatively benign to somewhat disabling to devastating as communication between the brain and other parts of the body is disrupted.

The vast majority of patients are mildly affected, but in the worst cases MS can render a person unable to write, speak, or walk. A physician can diagnose MS in some patients soon after the onset of the illness. In others, however, physicians may not be able to readily identify the cause of the symptoms, leading to years of uncertainty and multiple diagnoses punctuated by baffling symptoms that mysteriously wax and wane.

Once a diagnosis is made with confidence, patients must consider a profusion of information—and misinformation—associated with this complex disease. This brochure is designed to convey the latest information on the diagnosis, course, and possible treatment of MS, as well as highlights of current research. Although a pamphlet cannot substitute for the advice and expertise of a physician, it can provide patients and their families with information to understand MS better so that they can actively participate in their care and treatment.

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