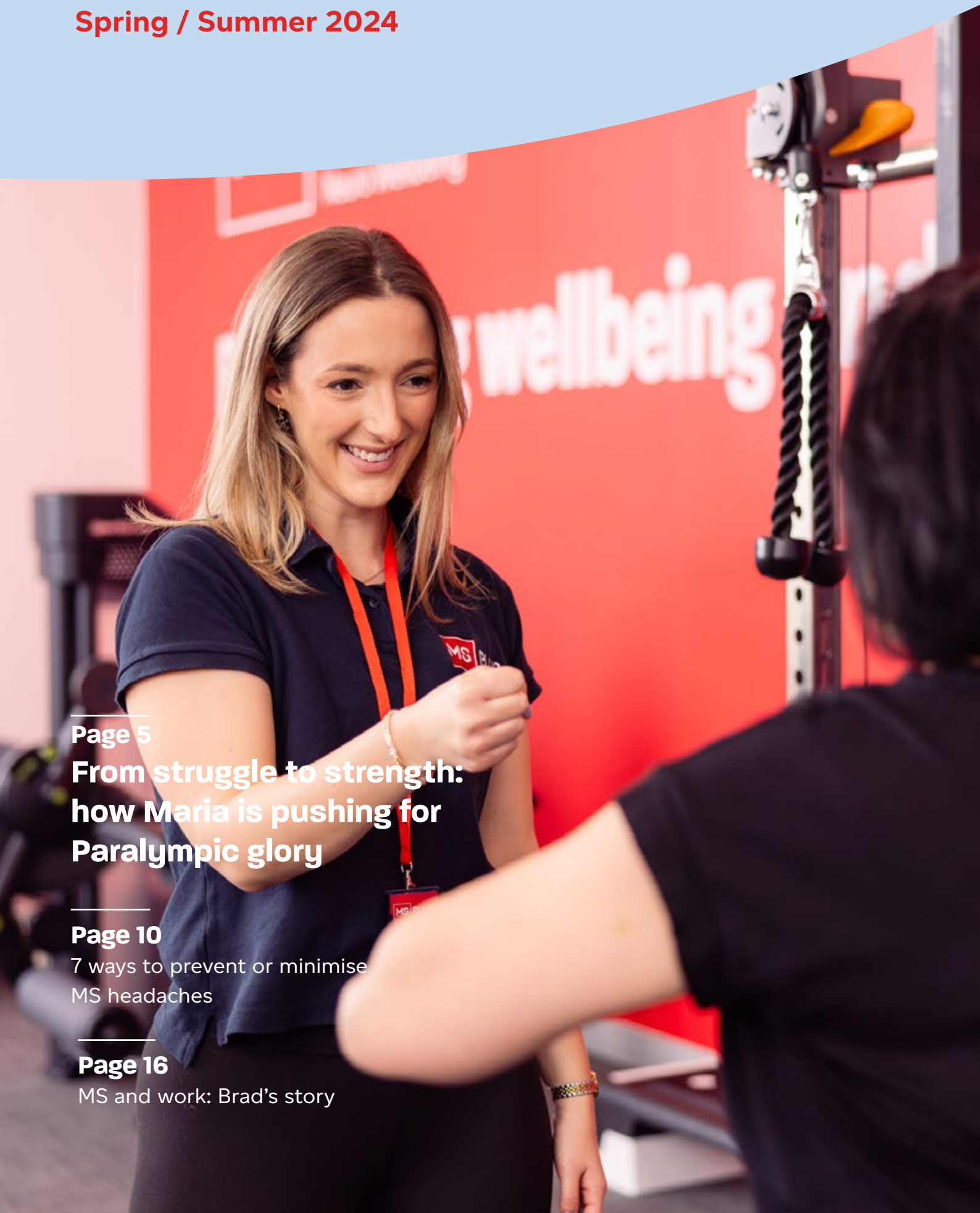

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From the CEO



John Blewonski | Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the Spring / Summer edition of Intouch magazine.

Our Go for Gold Scholarship program has just concluded for another year, with 25 more people living with MS now able to fulfill a long-held dream. Each year I am inspired by the resilience and passion of our recipients — and all our applicants — who pursue their dreams with such determination. If you missed out this year, you can submit an expression of interest for our 2025 scholarships via the MS Plus website.

Preparations are also well underway for our signature fundraising event, the **MS Gong Ride on Sunday 3 November**. You can challenge yourself to a 54km or 82km ride from Sydney to Wollongong to help us to raise money for MS services and research. If you haven't already signed up, I encourage you to join us for what will no doubt be an incredible event. More information on page 7.

We have welcomed several new allied health staff to the team over the past few months, as we continue to meet the growing needs of our community. Our allied health services are a key element in the many programs we provide support to those

living with neurological conditions. Our physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, occupational therapists, continence nurses and dietitians work with our clients to reduce falls risk and fatigue, improve balance, bladder control, strength and mobility, among other benefits. Newly introduced offerings, such as one-on-one shopping with a dietitian for our Melbourne clients, Plus Balance, Plus Boxing and Plus Hydro classes, the introduction of an allied health assistant and the integration of our allied health practitioners into our Care For You At Home aged care service, shows our deep commitment to helping clients to live and age well.

Our allied health team are also even more accessible to clients since the opening of our wellbeing centres in Hobart, Footscray and Blackburn — and the much-anticipated Lidcombe Wellbeing Centre in NSW, scheduled to open in November. I look forward to celebrating everything this incredible facility has to offer with our NSW clients in the New Year. In the meantime, please enjoy this edition of Intouch magazine and follow **@wearemsplus** on Facebook and Instagram for all the latest updates and advice.

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Focusing on your wellbeing

Wellbeing can mean different things: the relief of a tailored physiotherapy session, an exercise plan that helps you stay active, or simply connecting with others who understand.

That's why our Wellbeing Centres in Blackburn, Footscray, and Hobart are here to provide you with comprehensive neuro care to live well with MS. We also provide home visits and telehealth appointments to ensure you receive the support you need, wherever you are.

Our services:

- free one-on-one advice with our nurse advisor service
- tailored allied health services (physiotherapy, exercise physiotherapy and dietitian)
- personalised NDIS services to meet your goals
- employment support service (including occupational therapy)
- short and long-term accommodation services
- connecting you with your community through our Plus Peer Support program

Reach out to our friendly **Plus Connect** team today on **1800 042 138**, connect@msplus.org.au or visit msplus.org.au/support-services



Exploring Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) as a Potential Treatment for Multiple Sclerosis

Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) is a non-invasive procedure that uses magnetic pulses to stimulate oligodendrocytes; a type of cell in the brain.

In laboratory models, this procedure has shown promise in increasing the number of new oligodendrocytes that can repair the nerve damage observed in MS.

A recent study, published in the Multiple Sclerosis Journal (Experimental, Translational, and Clinical), aimed to determine if rTMS is safe and well-tolerated for people with MS. It also looked at how feasible the treatment is, how well participants could be kept unaware of whether

they were receiving real or placebo (pretend) treatment, and whether there were any changes in brain scans (MRI), self-reported symptoms, and cognitive or motor abilities.

Researchers saw no significant changes in MRI brain scans, self-reported symptoms, or cognitive and motor abilities during the study period. The study found that five participants experienced adverse events, including one serious event, but none of these were related to the rTMS treatment.

What does this mean for people with MS?

The findings suggest that rTMS is a safe and well-tolerated

treatment option for people with MS. Although this study did not show improvements in brain scans, symptoms, or cognitive and motor abilities, it did demonstrate that rTMS can be administered successfully and safely. This study marks an important first step in exploring new treatment options for MS.

As the research continues, we hope to see more definitive evidence on the effectiveness of rTMS in promoting brain repair and improving symptoms for people living with MS. Visit msaustralia.org.au



'Learning to put your hand up and ask for help is so important. I'm slowly getting better at it'

Patricia was diagnosed with MS 10 years ago, after a significant episode.

'I went to New Zealand for work and woke up one morning with the worst headache I'd ever had. Suddenly my balance was an issue and I couldn't work. I was getting spasticity and I temporarily lost my sight — everything was just shadows, so I ended up in emergency. I sort of fell in a heap and couldn't work for a few months.'

'I was diagnosed relatively quickly after my MRI. My GP got me in to see a neurologist who did some testing and found that I had lesions in my spine and my brain. My neurologist believed I had probably had episodes before, based on my

scan,' Patricia said.

Like most people who are newly-diagnosed, the news was a shock.

'I was terrified at first,' Patricia said. 'But then I was talking to a neurologist and I said to her, "Tell me if I'm looking at this the wrong way but I think I've got two choices. I can have a good life with MS or a bad life with MS. Am I thinking of this too simplistically?" And she said quite definitively, "No", so I thought to myself, "I'm going to have a good life with MS".'

Read Patricia's full story.



Less common symptoms of MS

Pseudoathetosis

Pseudoathetosis is abnormal writhing movements, often of the fingers, that is caused by damage to the pathways of the brain that transmits and processes the information about where your body is in space, called proprioception.

Navigating unusual symptoms will often require communication between multiple doctors, nurses and specialists as other causes are investigated. If you're experiencing any new or worrying symptoms, reach out to your healthcare team or you can make a free appointment with our experienced MS Nurses, phone **1800 042 138**.

From struggle to strength: how Maria is pushing for Paralympic gold



Maria was just getting into competitive swimming when she began experiencing symptoms of MS.

She had been training for the Australian Masters Games when she started experiencing spasms in her back, neck and arms and days when she was unable to get out of bed.

Despite her symptoms, Maria was determined to keep swimming. Unfortunately, Maria's symptoms progressed to the point where she lost functionality in her legs. She spent the time in bed researching how she might regain her mobility.

'I couldn't walk for a few weeks, but I was determined to move again,' Maria says.

Getting back in the pool

'One thing that really helped me was water.'

Maria started swimming again and found the water was the perfect place for her rehabilitation.

'In the water though it's much easier to build your strength. The buoyancy and resistance of the water and repetition of movements really helped,' Maria says.

After reading about Paralympian swimmer with MS, Stephanie Millward, Maria started to realise she didn't need to give up on her dream of swimming competitively.

'Steph's story inspired me to take my swimming to the next level and try to become the fastest para-swimmer with MS in Australia.'

In November 2023, Maria received an MS Go for Gold Scholarship and will now be able to fund the equipment, pool access and some of the coaching she needs to make it to the top.

'For me the Multi Class competition (for athletes with disabilities) was the goal I needed, a way to push myself, to refocus and when I won the Go for Gold Scholarship, I thought suddenly things are happening for me again.'

'On land I am clumsy and slow, yet in the water I am strong and powerful! I hope to be able to afford training more to keep swimming and ultimately, achieve my dream.'

A competitive spirit

After Maria placed second and third in Multi Class, a Paralympic swim coach experienced in working with swimmers with spinal cord injuries, watched and reached out to offer his help.

'My coach Nikolay is amazing. He is also a highly skilled rehabilitation therapist and can pick up what parts of my body aren't working based on how I am moving in the water.'

Maria recently took bronze at State, against a Paralympian who competed at the Tokyo Games. She is now in training for the next State and National Championships before setting her sights, one day, on Paralympic gold.

'I respect my body more and more every day for its remarkable ability to recover, adapt, survive and heal. When I swim, I forget that there's anything wrong with me. I feel strong, I feel powerful and determined.'

'I want to prove to society that we, MS warriors, are capable of remarkable deeds!'

Read Maria's full story.





Women's Health Week 2024

This Women's Health Week, we took the opportunity to recognise some of the unique challenges faced by women living with MS.

We have created easy to access resources, exploring the relationship between MS, fertility, pregnancy

and menopause. We've spoken with everyone from MS healthcare specialists, allied health staff and people living with MS to cover a huge range of topics, including:

- IVF, family planning and MS
- MS medications in pregnancy

- preconception diet
- bladder changes and menopause
- menopause and MS symptoms
- diet and menopause
- menopause and hormones

Check out the full list of resources available to support women's health on the MS Plus website msplus.org.au/womenshealthweek

Pregnancy can be an exciting time...but it can be a stressful one too.

When you're also living with MS, this can add an extra layer of uncertainty. In a special Women's Health Week interview, MS client and Ambassador, Rania, discusses her own journey navigating two pregnancies with MS.

Watch now.



Perimenopause and menopause can both influence the bladder area, including the need to urinate more frequently, the inability to control urination (incontinence) and increased urinary tract infections.

As these can also be symptoms of MS, it's important for women living with MS to understand the

steps they can take to manage — and live well with — incontinence symptoms as they enter this new phase of life.

MS Plus Continence Nurse, Fiona Easton shares her top tips for identifying and managing these symptoms. Listen to her special Women's Health Week podcast now.



Regular preventative health tests are important for your overall health and wellbeing.

These tests can identify early signs of potential health issues and monitor any existing conditions. Finding problems early means that you increase your chances for effective treatment.

Our handy checklist for women with MS is designed to help:

- You learn about the checks you need as a woman living with MS

- Get organised for your GP visit, so you get the most out of it
- Prompt a discussion with your GP or neurologist
- Kickstart conversations with peers and friends so that tips and experiences can be exchanged.

Download our 'Preventative health tests for women with MS' checklist at msplus.org.au/womenshealthweek

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Our Hobart Wellbeing Centre

Meet our new Physiotherapist

Ramu Khadka

Tell us a bit about yourself

My name is Ramu Khadka, I am quite excited to be a part of MS Plus. I originally came from Nepal where I worked for about 4.5 years working as a clinical Physiotherapist. I came to Australia to pursue postgraduate degree in 2018 and started working as physiotherapist since 2020.

What inspired you to pursue a career in physiotherapy?

My journey into physiotherapy was sparked by a deep-seated desire to help individuals regain their mobility and independence following injury or illness. Witnessing the transformative impact of physiotherapy on patients' lives inspired me to commit myself to this field.

What areas of physiotherapy do you specialise in?

My areas of interest include neurological physiotherapy, particularly in stroke rehabilitation

and managing conditions like Parkinson's disease, acute brain trauma, musculoskeletal rehabilitation etc.

Can you share some of your previous work experiences?

Since my graduation, I have been working in diverse settings including outpatient clinics, hospital rehabilitation, and aged care settings in Victoria and Tasmania.

How would you describe your approach to patient care?

My approach revolves around listening to their issues and designing achievable goals with collaboration.

What should new patients expect during their first visit with you?

New clients at MS plus can expect a comprehensive assessment where I'll evaluate their condition, discuss their medical history, understand their treatment goals and work towards achieving those goals.

How do you tailor your treatment plans to meet the unique needs of each patient?

I believe in personalised care that acknowledges each patient's unique circumstances. By combining evidence-based practices with patient preferences and goals, I create customised treatment plans that address specific needs and optimise outcomes.

To book an appointment with Ramu phone **1800 042 138**.



Managing Symptoms

The benefits of exercise

Quick tips from Exercise Physiologist Talita Welmans, based in our Hobart Wellbeing Centre.



Exercise is often referred to as medicine, and Exercise Physiologists (EPs) are uniquely qualified to prescribe it! With a deep understanding of the

interactions between exercise and chronic conditions, therefore we can design personalised programs to improve health and manage symptoms.

For instance, for people with Parkinson's disease, exercise can be almost as effective as medication in reducing symptoms like stiffness and tremors. Additionally, regular exercise can enhance the effectiveness of medications, leading to better overall outcomes.

EPs are also trained to work safely with clients who have contraindications to exercise, ensuring that each session is not only safe, but effective. Just like any medicine, the right "dose" and "frequency" of exercise are crucial, and it needs to be taken regularly to achieve its full benefits otherwise improvements can be transient. So, think of exercise as an essential part of your health toolkit, designed to help you feel your best!

Empowering wellbeing and con



Come and meet the team at our Hobart Wellbeing Centre and find out how we can help you to live well with MS! To find out more, phone 1800 042 138 or email connect@msplus.org.au



PLUS PEER SUPPORT

MS Plus offers a free Peer Support Program for people, family and carers affected by neuro conditions, including MS, to connect and support each other.

How would you like to connect?



Peer Talk

connect with a peer support volunteer one-on-one over the phone.



Online groups

join one of our online groups that have a particular focus or topic area.



Peer Links

short-term programs over the phone, facilitated by our peer support coordinator.



In person groups

connect face to face with others in your neighbourhood

Reach out today!
msplus.org.au/peersupport
or phone 1800 042 138

What is an Allied Health Assistant?

Following a comprehensive assessment by either an MS Plus physiotherapist or exercise physiologist, an allied health assistant seamlessly integrates regular check-ins and hands-on guidance into your personalised wellbeing plan.

Whether you prefer the convenience of home visits or clinic sessions, our expert team ensures you receive the attention and expertise you needed to thrive.

Take the first step towards a healthier you – book your initial assessment today, phone **1800 042 138** or email **connect@msplus.org.au**



Managing Symptoms

7 ways to prevent or minimise headaches

Headaches are the most common neurological condition and a leading cause of neurological disability.

Many people with MS experience headaches that significantly impact their quality of life.

You can make some healthy lifestyle changes to manage your MS headaches, which can help to improve other MS symptoms as well.

1. Exercise regularly
2. Drink lots of water
3. Relax your neck with targeted stretches and a warm compress
4. Get a good night's sleep
5. Avoid caffeine and excessive screen time
6. Eat a balanced diet
7. Reduce stress with yoga or meditation



Exercise regularly



Drink plenty of water



Relax your neck



Get a good night's sleep



Avoid caffeine and excessive screen time



Eat a balanced diet



Reduce stress with yoga or meditation



Could a simple blood test predict MS?

New research on autoantibodies shows promise

In recent years, antibodies against human (“self”) molecules have been identified in some autoimmune diseases, that are related to the disease process.

For example, in type 1 diabetes, antibodies that target insulin-producing cells and other proteins found in the pancreas are elevated.

In a non-diabetic person, the presence of these autoantibodies signals a higher risk of developing diabetes in the future.

This discovery has allowed the early treatment of children and adults at high risk of type 1 diabetes, successfully delaying disease development.

However, in MS a predictive or diagnostic autoantibody has not been reproducibly found.

Mass screening for the elusive MS autoantibodies

In a new study published in *Nature Medicine*, researchers from the University of California, San Francisco used a very large biobank of serum from over 10 million military personnel.

Approximately 11% of people with MS had autoantibodies that target

a specific human peptide segment. These antibodies could be detected years before the clinical onset of MS and were associated with higher levels of the marker of nerve damage, both before and after MS diagnosis.

This suggests that the autoimmune process and associated nerve damage may commence years before MS diagnosis.

Clues to autoimmune mechanisms

The peptide segment targeted by the MS autoantibodies is found in a variety of human proteins, as well as several infectious agents, including the Epstein-Barr virus.

This supports the possibility that the autoimmune process in MS might initially be triggered by an immune response to infection, that coincidentally also recognises human proteins. This phenomenon is known as ‘molecular mimicry’ and is a proposed mechanism for the onset of autoimmunity more generally.

However, the fact that these infections are so common in the general population suggests that other factors, such as genetics,

past exposures, and timing of infection, could also play a role in MS development.

What does this mean for people with MS?

Recent analyses of health records have found an increased incidence of symptoms such as fatigue, headache, anxiety, depression, and cognitive problems prior to MS diagnosis.

This suggests that MS pathology may begin years before the clinical onset of MS.

The discovery in this study of MS-specific autoantibodies present years before diagnosis raises the possibility that they could ultimately be used for early detection of MS, and early intervention to delay or prevent disease progression.

While these findings are promising, they currently apply to only about 10% of people with MS. The techniques used in this research might miss antibodies that react to the full 3D shape of proteins, suggesting that more as-yet-undiscovered antibodies could be relevant.

To read the full article, visit msaustralia.org.au





Managing Symptoms

Depression

Depression is common in MS.

About half of people diagnosed will have a depressive episode — three times higher than for the general population. Identifying depression and seeking early treatment is key. With the right information and support, depression can be managed effectively to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

Depression can also be a side effect of MS medication.

Here are some ways to improve your mental health with MS:

- practice mindfulness and meditation to assist with day-to-day stressors
- find hobbies or volunteer
- seek professional help
- avoid substances

- stay in touch with friends and family
- get outside for some fresh air and sunshine
- keep a diary to track and reflect how you're feeling
- exercise regularly.

For more information on depression and MS visit msplus.org.au/depressionanxiety

Where is the nearest toilet?

Maybe you've asked yourself this question whenever you left your house?

Many people living with MS learn to live with this question as a regular part of their day — but imagine if there was a tool to help you locate the closest loo to you?

Well luckily enough there is an app that can help you with exactly this question!

The National Public Toilet Map is FREE on Google Play or via the App Store. For more information visit toiletmap.gov.au





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Choose from different designs and occasions



Make your next special occasion a Moment for MS and help provide vital support to people living with multiple sclerosis



Managing symptoms

5 ways we can help manage pain

Approximately 60 per cent of people with MS experience pain that impacts their daily activities.

There are a lot of factors that can affect someone's pain or perception of pain such as physical, nerve, chronic, or acute pain, and even how you feel emotionally. The best way to handle pain is with strategies tailored to you.

1. Access personalised strategies

It's important to ensure you receive tailored care, as not everyone with MS experiences pain in the same way. A physiotherapist or exercise

physiologist will identify your specific needs and help improve your quality of life and enjoy greater independence.

2. Chat with an MS nurse

Our MS nurses are a free, one-on-one support service who can help you to manage pain with advice on specific medications, therapies and other supports.

3. Find an advocate to support you at work

An employment support consultant can work with you and your employer to manage your pain

levels through adjustments to your workstation, finding new ways to work and other supports.

4. Water therapy

Our Plus Hydro program can help you to improve your strength, balance and overall wellbeing.

5. Connect with the NDIS

Accessing the right pain management strategies is made easier by understanding and accessing your National Disability Insurance Scheme entitlements.

Plus FACETS

Fatigue management for MS

FACETS (Fatigue: Applying Cognitive behavioural and Energy Effectiveness Techniques to LifeStyle) is an evidence-based program designed for people living with MS to help manage fatigue using 'energy effectiveness' techniques and cognitive behavioral therapy strategies.

Developed by researchers from Bournemouth University and Poole Hospital in the UK.

The program includes:

- 6 x 90min sessions
- Normalising MS fatigue
- Fatigue management strategies
- Addressing negative automatic thoughts associated with MS fatigue.

Ready to get started?

msplus.org.au/FACETS

When: Evening and day time sessions run online throughout the year

Cost \$150



NDIS: Plan Management vs Support Coordination

Understanding the key roles in your NDIS plan can help you maximise your supports and achieve your goals. So what's the difference between our NDIS services, Plus Support Coordination and Plus Plan Management?

Essentially, our Support Coordinators are experts in connecting you with the services you need and help you to make the most of your NDIS plan. Our Plan Managers help to manage your NDIS finances.

Support Coordination

Helps you understand your NDIS plan and reports

Finds and connects you with service providers

Helps you to reach your goals

Plan Management

Processes your NDIS invoices and payments for you

Tracks budget and expenditure and provides monthly statements

Allows you access to both NDIS registered and non-registered providers

Ready to make the most of your NDIS plan? Contact MS Plus today! 1800 042 138 connect@msplus.org.au

MS mythbuster

Myth: Drinking less fluid helps with incontinence in MS

Reality: While reducing fluid intake might seem logical to minimise urgency and incontinence, it can actually worsen symptoms by concentrating urine, irritating the bladder and increasing the risk of urinary tract infections.

Maintaining adequate hydration while managing fluid intake strategically is key.

Ready to take control of your continence and MS symptoms?

Connect with our continence services today for personalised support and strategies tailored to your needs, phone **1800 042 138** or email **connect@msplus.org.au**





MS and work

'I know sometimes the idea of working full time can seem pretty tough if you have a chronic condition.'

Brad had been feeling unwell for many years before being diagnosed with MS in 2020. After leaving his job in international trade in July that year, Brad went to an optometrist for a standard eye test. The optometrist flagged they may need to do some further investigation.

'That's how I was originally diagnosed with MS. Amid all the other stressors and change occurring in my life at the time, my diagnosis was really the lowest point for me,' Brad says.

Brad's symptoms include muscle spasticity and cramping and stiffness in his hips after periods of inactivity. He also experiences fatigue and cognitive difficulties.

'My hips are a big issue in terms of seizing up if I'm sitting too long. My mobility is pretty good. I work on that every day, stretching etc. I try to keep moving as much as possible.'

Brad's symptoms can make working at a desk for a full workday difficult without supportive intervention. After leaving his job in the finance sector and remaining unemployed while he focused on his health, Brad was keen to find the right role to get him back in the workplace.

'I was completely lost for many years before I found out about my MS, but I soon realised that I needed to take ownership of my life and my body and not leave it up to someone else.'

Finding a new career path

Brad reached out to MS Plus early



on, through Plus Connect. He was given information about the Employment Support Service (ESS) and put in touch with Employment Development Manager, Chris Kotsonis — who helped Brad to find a new role. He also works with an Occupational Therapist to help manage his symptoms and make sure they don't impact his performance at work.

'My OT helped by assessing and organising funding for specialised ergonomic equipment and now my set up at both my home and office are perfect for what I need. This helps me to manage my fatigue and my spasticity.'

'Having that weekly support with an OT, to run through any challenges during your week at work — I don't think anyone can understand just how much that helps you. Exercise physiology, massage and other similar supports are just so beneficial for someone with any neuro condition.'

'It becomes about setting up these routines that help you to keep your daily life ticking along, which your OT can keep on track with as little as a 10 minute catch up,' Brad says.

'I know sometimes the idea of working full time can seem pretty tough if you have a chronic condition but if you can link into those resources that will continue

to keep you in the workplace, it's invaluable,' Brad says.

'A lot of people with MS probably don't realise all these supports are available to them.'

After working in the finance sector again for a while, Brad realised his passions really lay in helping others. He reached out to Chris again later that year.

'I told Chris what I really just wanted was to help people like me. He mentioned there might be a role available with the MS Plus Employment Support Service (ESS) team. I've now just reached the two-year mark with MS Plus.'

'Your MS is not nearly as scary as where your mind takes you initially. Understand that you control a lot of what you do from this point forward. Always ask questions and seek out information, it's there waiting for you,' Brad says.

'MS was the trigger I needed to start my years of internal work rather than always looking to the world outside myself for answers.'

'From my point of view, MS is not a bad life, it's just a bad day. Some days you just have to write off and say you'll try again tomorrow.'

Reach out to our employment support team today **1800 042 138** or email **connect@msplus.org.au**



Diet tips and tricks

Good carbs, bad carbs!

Carbohydrates are essential for energy and overall wellbeing, especially if you're managing fatigue in MS.

Our body's preferred fuel sources comes from the breakdown of carbohydrates but make sure to choose wisely between good carbs — whole grains, fruits, and veggies, the fuel your body loves and that give you sustained release energy as well as many essential nutrients, and avoid bad carbs —

processed, sugary snacks that just weigh you down. Recommended daily intake of grains/cereals will vary depending on your age and activity levels.

Examples of a standard serve:

- ½ cup of rice or pasta
- ¼ cup of muesli
- 1 slice of bread
- 3 crisp breads

For more information on diet and MS, visit msplus.org.au/plusdiet



Worried about falls?

If you have experienced a previous fall, you may be concerned about falling again and become less active than you used to be, or limit what you do in an attempt to avoid situations where you feel you might be more vulnerable.

Here are some Ideas to reduce the fear of falling:

- consider a personal alarm system
- always keep your mobile on you, so you can call someone for help
- talk about your concerns with others

- have a plan, consider what you would do in an emergency and who you would call
- try not to avoid social situations due to the fear of falling
- consult with a neuro-specialised physio or exercise physiologist, who can work on your function and mobility, improving your confidence.

For more information on reducing falls risk, visit msplus.org.au/plusbalance

Take control with continence support

We know it's not easy to talk about, but we're here to help. Our Plus Continence team can empower you to regain control and improve your confidence, sleep, relationships and daily life.

Reach out for a confidential chat today.



1800 042 138



connect@msplus.org.au



msplus.org.au/pluscontinence



Cultivating joy: how Kate discovered the healing power of a garden



Kate in her garden at home in Tassie

'I had my first episode of what I now know to be MS not long after my dad died back in 1993. I understand it is quite common to have your first episode in times of extreme stress.'

'These days my balance is a lot worse, I have issues speaking

sometimes, aphasia and my muscles get a bit stiff. All triggered by heat. The most debilitating issues are cognitive,' Kate says.

After moving from Queensland to Victoria and more recently Tasmania to find cooler temperatures, Kate has found spending time outdoors to be the best therapy.

'My garden is so important to me. Without it I do very little physical work or activity, so I get depressed. I just don't feel like myself without my garden. It grounds me and keeps me mentally calm when I need it,' Kate says.

'I get a lot of nourishment from nature, I find it very soothing. I like to go somewhere I can be in green places.'

Finding a new pathway after diagnosis

Kate left her work as a chef a few years after her diagnosis and was directed to retraining by MS Plus Employment Support Services. She then began working in an administrative role for the NAB.

'I used to be a chef but had issues with the heat and fatigue and you need good memory to be a chef.'

As soon as she left work for good in 2011, Kate became a passionate volunteer, beginning at a local art gallery. She also gives back in part through her seed library, as part of a seed savers group, which she hosts out the front of her house.

'Volunteering is huge for me. I found so many groups of people who were really supportive, I could do jobs that wouldn't make me ill and if it did make me ill, I could change what I was doing.'

Kate also joined a community garden in 2013.

'Joining my local community garden in Melbourne gave me access to local networks, as well as fresh fruit and veg, and helped me make wonderful like-minded friends.'

'This encouraged me to learn more about growing my own food and to develop my Melbourne garden. It was a steep garden so it kept me fit but over time accessibility and the risk of falls became more of an issue.'

'Now in Tasmania, we are in a lovely house with more space and some mostly flat land. I can go from inside to outside easily on wheels now but have struggled with some of the rough ground to the veggie patch. Whatever happens I will always find a way to continue to grow food and flowers and be creative in a garden, it is just so good for my mental health.'

Going for gold

While Kate loves to garden, her mobility has impacted her ability to navigate the uneven garden ground.

Her recent MS Go for Gold Scholarship funds will help to build a new garden path, so Kate can once again enjoy safe and comfortable access to her garden.

'I do my garden rounds every day if I can and I will soon be able to access my garden on good MS days and bad MS days,' Kate says.

'I feel it's really important for those of us with disability or difference to try to get out into the community as much as possible. Maybe by volunteering or joining a club or even a community garden. Loneliness is a killer and besides, the wider community needs to know we are here.'

What's On

Upcoming Programs

MS Plus Navigate Series: Family & Friends

Over two 75-minute sessions, an MS expert will guide discussions, provide information, links to resources and answer any questions you may have.

The sessions will be facilitated by an MS Nurse and cover topics such as understanding MS, navigating the health system, where to access support and how to look after yourself while supporting someone else.

Dates:

Various dates available in October, November and December.

To find out more visit msplus.org.au/navigate

Navigate Series: Newly Diagnosed

The online 90-minute sessions run weekly over five weeks. Each session will include expert content, an opportunity to learn from others experiences and a chance to ask questions.

The sessions will be facilitated by content experts such as MS Nurses, Psychologists and Allied Health professionals.

Dates:

Various dates available in October, November and December.

To find out more visit msplus.org.au/navigate

Upskill NDIS

Upskill NDIS provides you with an overview of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), so that you can be more confident in your decision to apply.

Our team has supported people throughout their NDIS access journey since 2016. They bring extensive experience and expertise of the ever-changing NDIS landscape.

This 40-minute online lunchtime session will cover:

- who and what is the NDIA and NDIS?
- explanation of common terminology
- what is a diagnosis vs disability?
- what evidence is required when you apply?

When: FREE day and evening sessions are available throughout the year.

Visit msplus.org.au/upskill to view upcoming sessions

Exercise Groups

NSW

To book, phone Plus Connect **1800 042 138**

Plus Boxing

Fridays 9am–10:30am
Studdy MS Centre, 80 Betty Cuthbert Dr, Lidcombe

Lidcombe Yoga (Chair based)

Wednesdays 10:15am
Studdy MS Centre, 80 Betty Cuthbert Dr, Lidcombe

Dance for Health (independent and chair based)

Mondays 10:30am
Studdy MS Centre, 80 Betty Cuthbert Dr, Lidcombe

East Gosford Exercise Group (independent)

Wednesdays 10:30am (school term only)
East Gosford Lions Hall

Marrickville Yoga (independent)

Tuesdays 9:00am
Addison Road Community Centre, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville

VIC

For queries relating to exercise groups in Blackburn, please call Plus Connect **1800 042 138**

ACT

To book, phone **1800 042 138**

Be better balanced (chair-based class)

Tuesdays 9:30am
Thursdays 10am
Gloria McKerrow House
117 Denison St, Deakin

Cost: \$10 / session or 10 classes for \$90



NO TWO PEOPLE'S MS JOURNEYS ARE THE SAME.

Every journey is different and so is our approach to support. Reach out to discover how we can help you manage your MS in a way that works for you.



1800 042 138
connect@msplus.org.au
msplus.org.au



PLUS
Neuro Wellbeing