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September 2022 Newsletter

Offering support, care, and hope...right here at home!

We are continuing to work in the office to make sure the telephone calls, emails, and office needs are being handled. If you are in need of an in person meeting, please call the office and we will be glad to make arrangements to meet with you. It is important to us that we provide up-to-date information on our website and Facebook page for you.

To receive newsletters, send your email address to: officemanager@tristatems.org

**The mission of the Tri-State Multiple Sclerosis Association
is to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with MS & their families in
Southern IN, Southern IL & Western KY**

Coping with Stress and MS

Susan Reynolds RN, MSCN

We are living in stressful times! The Pandemic has rocked our world for the past couple of years. Many people have experienced job loss, isolation, death and illness among family members, along with insecurity about their future. Having a chronic illness can increase stress. MS causes uncertainties about the future, which can lead to stress. Besides normal stress, and stress due to the pandemic, and the stress many people have about jobs, families and life, people with MS must deal with the unpredictability of having a chronic disease that can strike at a moment's notice.

Some studies have been done to try and prove the relationship between stress and MS. Many people with MS say they experience more symptoms during times of stress; and when the stress decreases, the symptoms become less severe. I have found this to be true with my own MS.

For myself, my first major MS exacerbation came during a very stressful time in my life. I was newly married, I had a new job and a new house, and I had moved to a new town. I had never experienced that much stress in my life. I had a sudden onset of numbness, tingling, and weakness from the neck down. I was given IV steroids in the hospital, and continued taking oral steroids for many months after the exacerbation. It took me a more than a year to recover from this episode. Not only me, but many MS patients have correlated their exacerbations with major stressful events such a divorce, accidents, major illnesses, surgery, or deaths in the family.

Personality as well as physiological changes can make a difference in susceptibility to getting sick with a chronic disease like MS. This was found in a study carried out by psychiatrists at the University of Pittsburgh. They found that individuals who scored high as neurotic personalities -- moody, nervous, and easily stressed -- report more disease symptoms and may be less protected against diseases like MS.

Another study, done in Israel during the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, examined the effects of the stress of war on people with MS. During the 33 days of war, there were 18 relapses among the patients in the study compared to 1 to 6 relapses over the 12 months before the war. The percentage of patients reporting intense stress during the hostilities was significantly greater among patients with wartime relapse compared to the rest of the patients. (44% vs. 20%)

Yet another study funded by the NIH found that stress may trigger MS flare-ups in women. Researchers from the MS Clinic at the University of Pittsburgh recruited 23 women with MS and followed them for a year. The women completed questionnaires about MS symptoms and life events such as starting a new job or having an automobile accident. During that year, the women experienced an average of 2.6 exacerbations that lasted an average of 29 days. Eighty-five percent of the exacerbations were associated with at least one stressful life event in the prior six weeks.

Researchers suggest that preventive strategies, such as developing coping skills and early interventions for anxiety and depression, could help women to avoid stress-induced MS flare ups.

Ways to Relieve Stress:

- ✓ Find Support Groups. Find a support group to chat with other people living with MS. Many support groups are available online.
- ✓ Express Your Anger. Express your anger, in a controlled way, without blaming others. Use “I” statements. “I am so angry” instead of “you make me so angry”.
- ✓ Treat Depression. If you think you are depressed, seek professional help. Depression can leave you completely unable to deal with stress. Research shows that 50% of people with MS will experience significant depression at some point along the way.

Techniques and Strategies to Relieve Stress:

- ✓ Relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, visualization, yoga, and Tai Chi
- ✓ Exercise, in a group or alone, in water or out of the water.
- ✓ Hobbies
- ✓ Ask for help when you need it. Be as specific as possible. “Could you please help me by...?”
- ✓ Eat regular balanced meals
- ✓ Use support and education services.
- ✓ Spend as much time as possible with people who have positive outlook and are not worriers.
- ✓ Schedule rest periods during the day.
- ✓ Learn to say “no”.
- ✓ Get at least 8 hours of sleep at night.
- ✓ Plan ahead in situations that can cause stress.
- ✓ Do one thing at a time. Don’t attempt the next task until you finish the one you are working on.
- ✓ Get out of your rut. Boredom can be stressful. Take a class, learn a new skill, join a club, or volunteer your time.

This is by no means a complete list of techniques to relieve stress. There is no “one correct thing” to do to cope with stress. Some people handle MS stress by talking, others read about it or participate in support groups; still others may ignore it most of the time. What works for one person may not work for others.

Tai Chi

The following information was provided to us by a past Support Group leader: Tai Chi can help reduce stress. Tai Chi is so well known for vitality and longevity that Harvard Medical School calls it "medication in motion." It is a safe and effective practice that anyone at any age may undertake. Tai Chi increases oxygen in the body by encouraging its adherents to breathe deeply, slowly, and mindfully. Tai Chi movements are very slow and gentle, and the breath is full and deep. This creates a state of hyperoxygenation within which cancer has a difficult time growing.

Tai Chi classes are taught by Sifu (teacher) Weeg, who has been studying martial arts since 1987 and has been teaching since 2018. All classes are pay as you go. No contracts or commitments.

Schedule

Evansville	Wednesdays	6:30 pm	Tri-State Holistic Wellness	500 Saint Phillips Rd	\$10
Evansville	Saturdays	11:00 am	Unity of Evansville	4118 Pollack Ave	\$10
Jasper	Tuesdays	6:30 pm	Dubois County Museum	2704 Newton St	\$12

For additional information, contact Tri-State Holistic Wellness. 812-568-5356 or Email: joe@tristateholisticwellness.com.

Introducing Selma Blair

Susan M Reynolds RN MSCN

If any of you who has MS has been curious about what it would be like to have a STEM cell transplant, that is an Autologous Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant (aHSCT) to treat their MS, I have found a documentary for you to watch. In this documentary, you can follow the MS patient from the beginning to the end of her Stem cell Transplant. The patient happens to be the TV/Movie Star, Selma Blair. The documentary is titled "Introducing Selma Blair". The documentary can be viewed on the Discovery+ Channel.

Selma's life took a bad turn in August 2018 when she was diagnosed with MS. Two months later, she shared the news on Instagram. Rather than hide, she wanted to show the world the realities and possibilities of living with a disability. She accessorized with chic canes and walked the red carpet at the 2019 Vanity Fair Oscar party in a fabulous Ralph Russo gown with coordinating cape.

Her symptoms continued to worsen despite medication, so in 2019, she made the decision to undergo a stem cell transplant in Chicago at Northwestern University. The relatively new, multistep procedure involves receiving a heavy round of chemotherapy to kill off the body's unhealthy immune system, because MS is a disease in which the body attacks its own central nervous system. Then, once a patient's immunity is destroyed, they receive an infusion of healthy stem cells that have been previously harvested from the patient themselves, with the goal of the body building a new, more functional immune system.

About Stem Cell Transplant

Stem cells are immature cells that develop into red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and more stem cells. Most stem cells are found in bone marrow, the spongy tissue inside large bones, but stem cells are also found in the blood stream.

Stem cell transplantation and bone marrow transplantation are different only in the way that the stem cells are collected. In bone marrow transplantation, bone marrow is collected from the hip bone in a surgical procedure.

The stem cells found in bone marrow and blood are hematopoietic (blood-forming) stem cells. Stem cell transplantation is a transfusion of stem cells, usually from the patient's own blood cells (called autologous hematopoietic stem cell transplant, aHSCT). The patient's stem cells are harvested, through apheresis, a procedure in which blood is collected through and IV, part of the blood such as platelets or white blood cells is taken out, and the rest of the blood is returned to the donor. A lab technician then evaluates the collected blood cells to make sure they are not infected and counts them to make sure there are enough for a transplant. The cells are then frozen by a special process in the lab. After the MS patient receives chemotherapy to destroy their immune system, the cells are warmed and reinfused into the patient.

After reinfusion, the patient enters the engraftment stage where stem cells migrate to the bone marrow and start producing new blood cells. Generally, engraftment takes one to three weeks before white blood cells are produced and 10 days to 4 weeks for red blood cells and platelets. Patients generally remain in the hospital for 2 to 3 weeks following their stem cell transplant to recover from any side effects.

Once discharged, the patients are vulnerable to side effects and infection, and will be seen in the aHSCT clinic with their attending doctor and a stem cell transplant advanced practice nurse.

This is a very abbreviated explanation of aHSCT. If you watch the documentary, you can witness what it must be like to go through a stem cell transplant. I won't give you more details because I don't want to spoil the documentary for you. It is a very emotional and realistic documentary. You will feel as if you are living through the procedure with her.

Private Shopping Event
 Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022
 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
 735 S Green River Road

ONLY 150 TICKETS AVAILABLE
 \$15 now, or \$20 at the door

DOOR PRIZES & DRAWING

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THANK YOU to all who supported our 'Strike Out MS' Fundraiser with The Evansville Otters! It was a fun event, and we appreciate everyone coming out!