

(W10) BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH, HEALTHCARE, AND YOU

Background: Research has shown that more women are developing multiple sclerosis (MS) than men. By 2000 the ratio had grown to approximately 4:1. Meanwhile women living with MS have special needs related to disease and symptom management, psychosocial adjustment, and gender-specific issues. Improved understanding of these issues can empower women living with MS to take control of their disease and gain hope for the future.

Objective: To develop an educational tool describing the unique needs of women living with MS. The purpose of the booklet is to educate and empower women with MS to effectively communicate with their healthcare providers facilitating the highest standard of care and optimal quality of life.

Process: A team of medical professionals from diverse disciplines participated in an educational program focusing on the needs and care of females with MS. Participating specialists included physicians from neurology, gynecology/obstetrics, physical medicine and rehabilitation and an advanced registered nurse practitioner certified in MS nursing. Each participant was assigned a specific topic to present to the roundtable followed by an open discussion on the perspectives of each discipline. Topics included the diagnostic process, early treatment, adherence and adjustment, symptom management, fertility, pregnancy, sexual health, rehabilitation and exercise, and psychosocial and family issues. A summary of the presentations and discussions was compiled for the lay reader for educational purposes.

Conclusions: This collaborative process resulted in the development of an educational booklet entitled, Bridging the Gap Between Research, Healthcare and You. This booklet is appropriate for patient and caregiver, community, and professional education.

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