

(W20) A PROGRAM TO TRANSITION PEDIATRIC MS PATIENTS TO ADULT CARE AND INDEPENDENT LIFESTYLES

Introduction: There is increasing awareness that multiple sclerosis (MS) can begin in adolescence or even in childhood. It is estimated that up to 5% of MS cases begin before the age of 18. Between January 2006 and December 2007, 33 pediatric MS patients were evaluated by the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Center for Pediatric Onset Demyelinating Disease (CPODD). The population was 64% female and 55% African-American. Average age of onset of these pediatric MS patients was 14.2 ± 0.5 years, with 87% of the MS patients ($n=29$) being >13 years of age at diagnosis. At the time of the initial evaluation at CPODD, mean age was 16 ± 0.5 years, an age when plans for college, career, and leaving their parents' home are in the early stages of development. The diagnosis and management of MS can be a formidable barrier to making these life transitions successful.

Proposed Program: CPODD proposes to institute a structured program to assist patients and families to transition to not only the adult health care environment, but also adjustment to a more independent adult lifestyle. This program will include a 5-part educational series to heighten the independence of patients who are approaching young adulthood. The topics discussed in the series will include current medical care, future adult healthcare, college and professional development, health insurability, and social and life skills. A variety of educational methods will be utilized so that patients will gain the full benefits of the program. The educational sessions will be conducted during "Lunch and Learn" sessions, during clinical visits and on an individual basis.

Program Evaluation: After each of the 5 parts, at "graduation" from the program and 6 months afterwards, patients and their parents/guardians will be asked to provide feedback in order to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Yolanda Harris, RN, MSN
Sarah Middleton, MPH; Jayne Ness, MD, PhD; Khurram Bashir, MD, MPH
UAB Center for Pediatric Onset Demyelinating Disease
1719 6th Ave S, CIRC 235A
Birmingham, AL 35294
United States