

(W27) QUILTING FOR HEALING AND HOPE FOR MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Introduction: This is a story of a quilt, hope, and multiple sclerosis (MS): a patchwork of people, memories and creative energy on a quest for a cure. Conjure up an image of a quilt: layers of warm, soft, comforting fabric tucked around the body; a handmade expression of love. As described by fellow nurse Terri Pauser Wolf, there is a parallel with the nursing profession with its essence in caring. Though the project began as a personal awareness and fundraising effort, I was able to provide nursing care of support, education, empowerment, and advocacy through it. Inspired by the AIDS and cancer memorial quilts, I envisioned a similar quilt created by people with MS, their family members, friends, and healthcare professionals.

Background: Historically, quilts have been created by women and are recognized for their historical, artistic, and emotional value, as well as their healing potential. Quilts are beautiful artworks providing warmth and comfort and create a sense of unity among their makers.

Methods: With a grant to begin, I solicited homemade quilt blocks. I provided fabric and simple instructions; no sewing was necessary. I have created three quilts. Each quilt consisted of twenty-five panels, each created by someone touched by the disease who also donated money to the National MS Society or Multiple Sclerosis Foundation. Volunteer professional quilters assembled and quilted them. In addition to the squares, panel contributors shared their stories and experiences and this information travels along with the completed quilt.

Results: Poignant themes reflected in the panels and stories include endurance, faith, hope, humor, respect, admiration, coping, a journey with chronic illness, and support of family and friends. These quilts have been a valuable focal point of display at public events, generating hope, inspiration, and empathy for those living with this disease, the public, and professionals. After display, the quilts are raffled as a fundraiser.

Summary: This poster will provide education on the healing benefits of a quilt, offer suggestions for implementing this project in other communities, and display one of the quilts.

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