

# CMSCenterPiece

The 2008 CMSC Annual Meeting Newsletter

Denver, CO

Edited by June Halper and James Simsarian, MD • May 30, 2008

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## CMSC/ACTRIMS Lecture “MRI and Our Understanding of MS”

Dr. Jerry Wolinsky of the University of Texas Health Science Center highlighted the state of the art of MRI as a tool in MS diagnosis. In the 25 years since the first magnetic resonance images of patients with MS appeared in the neurologic literature, research interest in this area has exploded. Looking at conventional MRI, Wolinsky described both advances in gadolinium enhancements and T2 and T1 imagery and cautioned in interpreting the data from these techniques. To pave the way for the future, superior conventional MRI sequences should strive to maintain compatibility with the databases that now go back more than 20 years. With higher field scanners, signal-to-noise ratios could improve to the point of resolving diffuse damage from focal damage and further explore normal-appearing white and gray matter. Because of the clinical/MRI paradox and to develop new drugs, he expects that researchers will need to develop primary trial endpoints that combine MRI data with other clinical measures of disease.

## CMSC Symposium: Neuromyelitis Optica

Although neuromyelitis optica (NMO) is also a demyelinating disease, patients with this disease always show transverse myelitis and optic neuritis. The Aquaporin-4-specific autoantibody, also known as NMO-IgG, is often detected in these patients. Chaired by Dr. Brian Weinschenker, this symposium defined this disease and how it differs from standard MS, advances in identifying the target antigen (Aquaporin-4) and optimal patient management.

### Session highlights:

Although NMO is more common in adults, the disease also occurs in children and adolescents. Dr. Sean Pittock discussed collaborative work investigating the **characteristics of pediatric NMO**. In children, this disease presents a similar serological profile: nearly 80% of patients with relapsing NMO, test positive for NMO-IgG. Longitudinally-extensive spinal cord lesions (LESCLs) -- though often characteristic of NMO in adults -- could also indicate MS in a child.

Dr. Jun-ichi Kira gave an overview of **Asian Optic Spinal MS** and classical MS in Japan. Many patients with the more severe type of Asian Optic Spinal MS also test positive for NMO-IgG. These patients also tend to have longer LESCLs.

## Lively afternoon sessions

In “Statistics and Analyses: How Do I Read This Stuff?” Gary Cutter, Ph.D., and Stacey Cofield, Ph.D., gave tips for good study design and presenting and interpreting statistical data. Both presentations of this session were standing room only.

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Cutter and Cofield's take-home messages:

- The question matters.
- Study design matters.
- Variability reduces power.
- Standardization reduces variability.
- Small p-values don't always equal good results.
- Bias is the "invisible" demon.

**"Caregiver Burden"**— In a session that showed video examples and promoted lively discussion, Mary Elizabeth Quig, Ph.D., and Carol Saunders, BSN, described the emotional and physical challenges that caregivers face: from stress and anxiety to increased blood pressure and a greater risk of heart attacks. They described their own experiences in facilitating a caregiver support group and highlighted results from a recent NARCOMS study that focused on these questions.

## Friday highlights

8:00 am—John Whitaker Lecture: "Neuropathogenesis of MS" by Dr. Michael Racke

9:00-12:00—CMSC symposia

- CIS—What Do We Know? What Do We Do?
- Advances in MRI in MS
- Outcome Measures for Fatigue and Gait: a CMSC Consensus Conference Summary

7:30 pm— Dessert options

Sweet Relief: Controlling the Injection Fear Factor, sponsored by Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals

A Sea Change in MS Treatment—The Potential of Small Molecules, sponsored by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation.



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**MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS: COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO COMPLEX CHALLENGES**

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