

From: US Department of Veterans Affairs <veteranshealth@messages.va.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023
To:
Subject: Newest Issue! VA Multiple Sclerosis E-letter for Veterans

MS VETERAN

VA Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence



Spring 2023 Issue

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March is MS Awareness Month



MSCoE encourages Veterans with MS, and their caregivers and family members of Veterans with MS, to raise MS awareness. Making a connection can help people expand their knowledge and understanding

of MS, improving support of individuals whose lives are affected by the disease.

[Learn More](#)

Veterans with MS: Michele Catlin

In 1995, while stationed as a young Marine in Yuma, AZ, I lost vision in my right eye. It was not complete loss, but significant enough that I was sent to Balboa Naval Hospital where I was ultimately diagnosed with optic neuritis, often a symptom of MS. MS was discussed at that time, but I was young. I didn't know anything about MS and Google was not yet a thing. It wasn't until 2021 that I was diagnosed with MS. One thing I realized is how much I accomplished while having MS, and not knowing it.



[Read Full Article](#)

Staying Upright: Avoiding Falls

MS affects different parts of the brain or spinal cord in different people, causing somewhat different problems for each person. Many people with MS have poor balance and are at risk for falling. More than 50% of people with MS fall at least once in six months and around 30% fall twice or more. Some people with MS are so afraid of falling that they stop being active



to avoid falls. Research is helping scientists find out why this happens and how to help people with MS fall less often.

[Read Full Article](#)

Things to Consider About Driving

MS can affect the ability to perform activities of daily living. Driving is the most complex activity of daily living performed every day. It is important not to minimize the complexities of driving or overestimate one's abilities. Driving requires adequate vision, motor, memory, and thinking skills.



MS can affect all these areas. As MS evolves, required driving skills may diminish in several domains

[Read Full Article](#)

Webinar: MS & Military Service

Join us for a conversation with Dr. Mitchell Wallin and Dr. Joel Culpepper who have been studying the connection between military exposures and MS for over two decades. Learn about who gets MS, risk factors, military service connection, resources available for Veterans living with MS, and the new VA Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. ([flyer](#))



Date: Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Time: 1 pm ET, 12 pm CT, 11 am MT, 10 am PT

Topic: MS Risk, Prevalence, and Service Connection

Speakers: Mitch Wallin, MD, MPH and Joel Culpepper, II, PhD

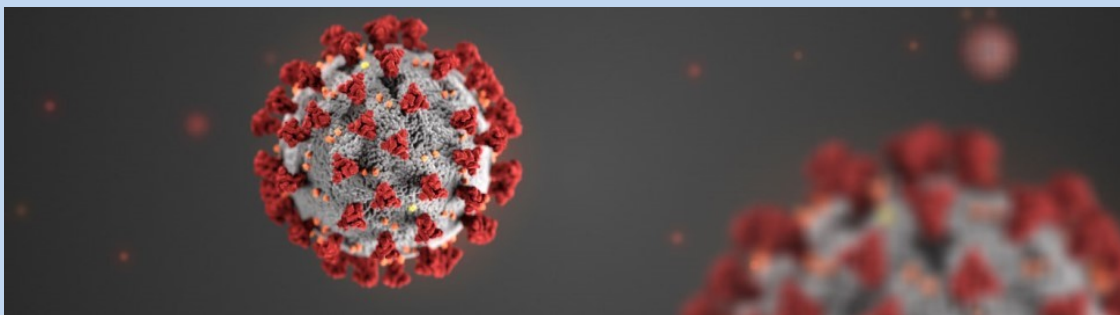
Attend: Stream live on [YouTube](#), join the day and time of program, registration is not required

New DMT for MS: Ublituximab

Ublituximab (Briumvi®) is a newly FDA Approved medication for the treatment of relapsing remitting MS, clinically isolated syndrome, and active secondary progressive MS. Active secondary progressive MS means that there are ongoing clinical relapses and/or new MS spots on MRI.



Ublituximab is a monoclonal antibody that targets the CD-20 receptor on B cells and works by lowering the number of B cells in the body. B cells are part of the inflammatory response that causes damage in MS. It is administered by IV infusion every 24 weeks for infusions lasting 1 hour each. Ublituximab works in a very similar way to other CD-20 targeting antibodies rituximab and ocrelizumab (Ocrevus®). There are no studies that show that ublituximab is any better or worse than rituximab or ocrelizumab.



COVID-19 Vaccination & B Cell Treatments in MS

Vicky Chen, MD

B-cell treatments for MS, such as ocrelizumab and rituximab, are medications that lower the number of B-cells in your blood. B-cells are immune cells. B-cell treatments are helpful for people with MS because lowering the number of B-cells make it less likely that the immune system will attack the brain and spinal cord. However, B-cell treatments can also make vaccines less effective. This includes the COVID-19 vaccine. To understand how this happens, and what to do about it, it helps to understand how vaccines work.

Vaccines prepare the immune system to fight off infections. Vaccines stimulate B-cells to make antibodies specific for the infection they protect against. These antibodies prevent viruses from entering cells and thus help protect from future infections. Vaccines also train T-cells of the immune system to quickly spot and destroy viruses in case of future infections.

B-cell treatments for MS can lower the amount of antibodies made in response to a vaccine. This can make the vaccine less protective. But vaccines still have some benefit for patients taking B-cell treatments because these treatments do not lower the number of T cells and do not prevent vaccines from training T-cells to fight future infections.

Because B-cell treatments for MS can make vaccines less effective, people with MS taking B-cell treatments should work with their medical providers to figure out how best to protect themselves from infections, including COVID-19. This may include optimizing the timing of vaccination and B-cell treatment administration, taking additional protective treatments such as premade antibodies, and taking extra protective steps with masking and social distancing.

VA "MS & Vets" Podcast Series

The monthly MS & Vets podcast series discusses important issues related to the health and quality of life for Veterans with MS. During every episode you'll hear subject matter experts weigh in on MS issues and talk about services the VA provides. Sign up to receive alerts for new episodes, available the 2nd Monday of each month.



[Learn More](#)

National MS Society Highlights

The [NMSS](#) works collaboratively with the [VA MS Centers of Excellence](#) to ensure Veterans have access to care and resources.

MS Navigators: [MS Navigators](#) connect you to the information, resources, and support needed to move your life forward. Call 1-800-344-4867 or send an e-mail to contactusnmss@nmss.org.

Ask an MS Expert Webinars: The weekly [Ask an MS Expert](#) virtual program series provides an opportunity to learn more about MS from top MS experts.

Support Groups: NMSS [self-help groups](#) focus on support, advocacy, education, and wellness. Some groups also serve specific populations, such as young adults, parents with MS, carepartners, or [Veterans](#).



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

Can Do MS Webinars

Join [Can Do MS](#) live from the convenience of your home for free, in-depth discussions that cover a variety of topics.

Date: 2nd Tuesday, Every Month

Time: 8-9 pm ET, 7-8 pm CT,
6-7 pm MT, 5-6 pm PT

Go to www.cando-ms.org for information on topics, speakers, and registration. Learn about their free, one-day virtual [JUMPSTART](#) programs.



VA Resources & Programs

**VA Caregiver
Support Line
855-260-3274**

**Veterans Crisis
Line: Dial 988
then Press 1**

**VA Women
Veterans
Health Care**

**VA | News
Blog**

**VA My
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