

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

MS VETERAN

VA Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence



Winter 2023 Issue

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Veteran with MS: Bill Metzger



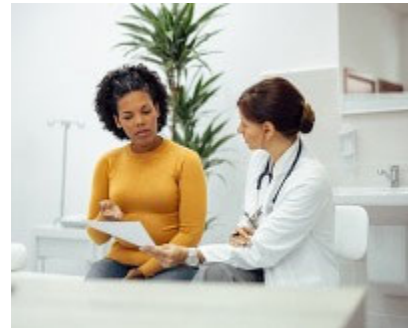
There are many wonderful things in this world, and I've spent much of my life trying to see them. I enlisted in the Navy my senior year of high school, starting my tour in September 1964. I served for three years, with a two-year tour in Guam.

Following my military service, I educated myself in journalism and photography, and set about using those skills. I started getting the symptoms of MS in 1978 and was diagnosed in 1983, though that diagnosis never changed my desire and ability to see and explore.

[Read Full Article](#)

Wellness & MS

MS and your general medical health go hand in hand. This means it's just as important to take charge of your general health as it is to keep on top of your MS care. People with MS are just as likely to have medical conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, and cancers as anyone else, so it is important to have a yearly primary care visit. Likewise, to successfully manage your MS, it is also important to see an MS specialist at least once a year.



[Read Full Article](#)

Living Your Best Life with MS

Wellness is attainable for everyone, even when living with a chronic illness. Achieving health and wellness is a lifelong process in which people make intentional choices, set personal priorities, and engage in health-promoting activities. Intentional choices include choosing the foods you eat, choosing whether to smoke, choosing to spend time with friends and family, choosing to engage in physical activity, devoting time to intellectual stimulation, and more.



[Read Full Article](#)

Colitis – A Possible Rare Effect of B Cell Treatment in MS

Anza Memon, MD (Detroit, MI VAMC)

Anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody (mAb) therapy, also known as B cell treatment, is used to treat various autoimmune disorders and cancers. There are two commonly used Anti-CD20 mAbs: rituximab and ocrelizumab. These mAbs lower the number of B cells in the body by targeting the CD-20 receptors on B cells. B cells are part of the immune system, and their malfunction can lead to autoimmune disorders.



Rituximab is an older B cell therapy FDA approved for the management of autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis, polyangiitis (inflammation of the blood vessels), pemphigus vulgaris (a skin condition), and cancers such as non-Hodgkins's lymphoma and specific form of leukemia. Rituximab has also been studied and used off-label to treat autoimmune neurological disorders such as MS and myasthenia gravis. Ocrelizumab is a newer B cell treatment approved by the FDA for treating relapsing or primary progressive

forms of MS. Ocrelizumab is the only treatment FDA approved specifically for treating primary progressive MS.

There are several published cases and case series where patients taking B cell therapy for MS developed colitis. Colitis is an inflammatory bowel disease affecting the colon, leading to symptoms like abdominal pain, diarrhea, and rectal bleeding. It is still uncertain if the B cell therapy caused the colitis or not. While the relationship between B cell therapy and colitis is being explored, people taking B cell therapy and their providers should be on the lookout for gastrointestinal symptoms like abdominal discomfort, diarrhea, or blood in stool.

Early detection and management of colitis helps achieve a good recovery. If you are on B cell therapy and experience digestive issues, contact your primary care provider promptly so the cause of your gastrointestinal distress – including B cell therapy – can be considered. If you are currently undergoing or planning to start B cell therapy, have an open and informed discussion with your MS provider about this therapy's possible advantages and disadvantages.

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.



Date: 2nd Monday, Every Month

Sign up to receive alerts for new episodes.

[Learn More](#)

National MS Society Highlights

The [Society](#) 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](#).

[Learn More](#)



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

Can Do MS Webinars

[Can Do MS](#) is a national nonprofit offering free programs and resources designed to help people living with MS and their care partners learn how to make each day the best it can be. Join their monthly [webinar series](#) from the convenience of your home for in-depth discussions that cover a variety of topics.

Date: 1st Wednesday, Every Month



Time: 7 pm ET, 6 pm CT,
5 pm MT, 4 pm PT

Location: [A Virtual Event!](#)

In addition to their monthly webinar series, they have half day and full day programs, as well as coaching and meet-ups.

[Learn More](#)

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
HealthVet**

**VA Whole
Health**

Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence

VA MS Center of Excellence East | Baltimore, MD & Washington, DC

VA MS Center of Excellence West | Seattle, WA & Portland, OR

Contact us at: MSCentersofExcellence@va.gov

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