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To:
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MS VETERAN

VA Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence



Spring 2024 Issue

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Veteran with MS: Malika Montgomery



When I learned there was no known cure for MS, I knew I had to come up with a game plan on how to battle MS until there was one. The first five years were rough. I was just 26 when diagnosed and I had a lot of moments where I asked God, "Why me? I'm so young and healthy." As I heard other people's stories on living with MS, I found I

could relate and realized that I'm not alone.

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MS Research & You

MS research often looks at the effectiveness of various interventions or lifestyle changes. Studies also include “basic science” research done in a lab, testing medications, and evaluating non-medication interventions to help manage or improve symptoms or disability related to MS. Researchers look for patterns or correlations in studies to understand their meaning and impact. While some studies examine past data, others look at data collected in the present and into the future.



[Read Full Article](#)

Get Out & Play

As health care professionals, we are going to tell you that getting out and exercising is fun, will decrease your stress, reduce weight, improve cardiovascular endurance, decrease depression, and reduce secondary medical conditions. You know all that. However, we all find ourselves, at some point in our lives, in a situation



where getting started can be the challenge. The movement from the rut to something different has to start with you, but we are there to back you up.

[Read Full Article](#)

Seizures & MS

**Marissa Kellogg, MD, MPH, FAES
(Portland, OR VAMC)**

Seizures and epilepsy occur in a small minority of people with MS. Recent studies using large national databases in different countries show a cumulative incidence of 3-5% of people with MS develop epilepsy. An additional 1-2% of people with MS will experience a single lifetime seizure, but they do not develop epilepsy (i.e., recurrent seizures). In other words, approximately 1/20 people with MS will develop epilepsy and 1/50 will experience a single lifetime seizure but not develop epilepsy. The more physical disability a person has from MS (as assessed using the EDSS disability scale for MS), the more likely they are to develop seizures. Also, the longer duration someone has MS, the more likely they are to develop seizures.



A seizure is a sudden, uncontrolled electrical disturbance in the brain. It can cause changes in behavior, movements or feelings, and changes in levels of consciousness or alertness. There are many different types of seizures, which range in symptoms and severity. They typically last 30 seconds to 2 minutes. A seizure that lasts longer than 5 minutes is either 1) a medical emergency, or 2) a different condition that looks like a seizure but is in fact something else. When someone carries a diagnosis of epilepsy, that means they have had at least two seizures in their lifetime and are at higher risk for ongoing seizures without treatment.

Different types of brain injury or structural brain abnormalities can cause seizures and epilepsy. Common causes include stroke, traumatic brain injury, tumor, brain infection, or MS. However, many

times the cause is unknown. Additionally, most people with MS, stroke, or brain injury do NOT develop epilepsy – so we don't completely understand why some people with similar brain conditions develop seizures while others do not. Possible reasons for increased seizure risk include a genetic predisposition, prior infectious or toxic exposure, or increased brain inflammation.

Fortunately, we have very effective anti-seizure medications (ASMs) to prevent recurrent seizures in people with epilepsy. 60-70% of people with epilepsy will achieve seizure-freedom on medications alone – usually by taking just a single medication. Side effects are highly variable between individuals and different medication options – but they can negatively affect quality of life. Some ASMs may interact with MS medications, but fortunately most ASMs do not. It is important to discuss these factors with a prescribing provider and pharmacist to come up with an optimal treatment plan. For the remaining 30-40% of people with epilepsy whose seizures are not controlled with medications alone, there are multiple surgical treatment options, some of which are potentially curative. If you have further questions about seizures or epilepsy, talk to your healthcare provider. They can refer you to a VA seizure specialist if needed.

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

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Sent to jaimie.henry@va.gov on behalf of US Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration · 810 Vermont Avenue, NW · Washington, DC 20420 · 877-222-VETS (877-222-8387)