Vol 42 | FALL 2025

MS PROGRESS REPORT

A Legacy of Resilience in the Face of MS

Sarah's journey with multiple sclerosis (MS) began long before her own diagnosis. She was just 10 years old when her mother was diagnosed with the disease. As her mother's MS progressed, Sarah stepped into a caregiving role early in life — an experience that shaped her perspective and prepared her for challenges she would one day face herself.

"My mom's symptoms started when I was young," Sarah shares. *"She had back pain and trouble walking, but it took years to get a diagnosis. Over time, she went from using a cane to a walker, then to a wheelchair. It's very emotional for me to think about because she lost almost every function and eventually moved into a long-term care facility when she could no longer live independently."*

Sarah and her father visited her mom daily, helping with small but meaningful tasks.

> "I'd help her change the TV channel, brush her hair and feed her meals, Sarah says."

"It was hard watching her lose so much independence, but it also gave me perspective and a deeper appreciation for the little things we often take for granted."

Years later, Sarah experienced her own diagnosis after sudden double vision led to an MRI. *"It was a huge shock,"* she says. *"I was scared, unsure about what this meant for me and how it was going to impact my life moving forward."* Telling her family, especially her mother, was incredibly difficult.

Sarah and her mother

Today, Sarah receives biannual infusions that help her stay active, maintain her career and continue giving back to the community she loves. She finds purpose in volunteering, advocating for others with MS and raising funds to support groundbreaking research. *"Research is so important. When my mom was diagnosed, she had no treatment options,"* Sarah explains. *"When I was diagnosed, it was a completely different story."* Thanks to advancements in science, Sarah is living a full life which is proof of how far MS care has come.

Sarah remains optimistic about the future and inspired by the strength passed down from her mother. ***"We're all fighting for a future without MS,"* Sarah says. Through her work, her voice, and her unwavering hope, Sarah is helping to build that future — one step, one story and one breakthrough at a time.**

Message From the President

This fall, we're excited to share some of the incredible momentum your support has helped create. Across the country, researchers, healthcare professionals and people living with MS are working together to push the boundaries of what's possible. It's your generosity that helps turn these possibilities into real progress, and for that, we are truly grateful.

At MS Canada, we're proud to support groundbreaking research and offer trusted programs to improve quality of life for Canadians affected by MS. In this issue of your ***MS Progress Report***, you'll meet Dr. Nabeela Nathoo, a neurologist and researcher whose work is helping to improve diagnosis and treatment for underrepresented populations with MS. By applying advanced MRI techniques and focusing on health equity, Dr. Nathoo is helping shape a future where all people with MS receive the care they deserve.

You'll also read about Sarah, whose deeply personal MS journey spans two generations. As a child, Sarah helped care for her mother, who was living with MS. Today, Sarah is navigating her own MS diagnosis with courage and optimism. Her story is a powerful reminder of the strength within the MS community and the importance of continuing to invest in support and research.

While Canada continues to have one of the highest rates of MS in the world, the outlook has never been more hopeful. **Because of your support, we're closer than ever to understanding MS, improving treatment and ultimately ending the disease for good.** Together, we're not just making progress — we're building a future filled with more possibilities, better care and renewed hope for every person affected by MS.

Sincerely,

Pamela Valentine

Dr. Pamela Valentine
President and Chief
Executive Officer
MS Canada

KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT MS.

MS affects our family members, friends and neighbours.

Canada has one of the **highest rates** of MS in the world.

If you've been infected with Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), you're **32X more likely** to be diagnosed with MS*.

On average, **every two hours**, someone living in Canada will be diagnosed with MS.

Worldwide, there are around **2.9 million people** living with MS.

For the sake of those we love, we must continue to push for progress. **Thank you** for your support as we help people with MS live their best lives.

*This figure comes from a single Harvard study of more than 10 million people, though further research is needed to fully explore the connection.

Building a Stronger MS Rehabilitation Standard

Canada's First MS Rehabilitation Guideline

Rehabilitation plays a critical role in helping people with MS manage symptoms, maintain independence and stay connected to the activities that matter most. Yet, access to quality rehabilitation services varies widely across Canada.

Funded by MS Canada, with support from the Frederick and Isabella Troop Family Foundation, Dr. Sarah Donkers and her team at the University of Saskatchewan are working to change that. Over the next three years, they will lead the development of Canada's first MS Rehabilitation Clinical Best Practice Guideline.

This national initiative will bring together leading experts, clinicians and people living with MS to review the latest evidence and build consensus on effective rehabilitation and symptom management strategies. The guideline will cover key areas such as fatigue, mobility, cognition and emotional health — offering clear, evidence-informed recommendations for care across the MS journey.

By improving consistency and quality in rehabilitation services, this project aims to enhance well-being and health outcomes for people with MS across the country. The final guideline will be freely available online, supported by tools to encourage widespread use and adoption for people with MS and their healthcare team.

To learn more, visit **mscanada.ca/rehabilitation**

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Dr. Nabeela Nathoo

Dr. Nabeela Nathoo's path to becoming a neurologist began as a teenager with a dream — and today, she's turning that dream into real-world impact. A graduate of the University of Calgary, where she completed her BSc, MD, and PhD in Neuroscience, Dr. Nathoo has spent over 15 years focused on MS, combining clinical care with cutting-edge research. Now, she works as a neurologist and researcher at the University of Alberta.

> "Not being able to answer questions is what motivates me to continue pursuing research."

Her work centers on two main areas: advancing MRI imaging techniques and improving our understanding of MS in underrepresented populations. *"Often those from underrepresented populations have different risk factors* for developing MS and can have more aggressive MS," Dr. Nathoo explains. *"It is important to study these factors — to get a better understanding of MS overall and to optimize care for all living with MS."*

Dr. Nathoo's current research investigates differences in clinical and imaging features of MS in African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) individuals compared to white Canadians, using advanced MRI methods that examine different components of nerve cells and how they are impacted by the disease. Collaborating with experts at the University of Alberta and Mayo Clinic, her goal is to build more equitable care strategies by identifying how MS uniquely affects different communities.

Dr. Nathoo notes MS Canada's pivotal role in supporting early-career researchers like herself. *"I have had the good fortune of being funded by MS Canada since I was in my PhD,"* she says.

Now a neurologist and researcher at the University of Alberta and a member of its Neuroscience and Mental Health Institute, Dr. Nathoo continues to push the field forward. Whether she's in the clinic or the lab, she's driven by a singular goal: "I hope to improve the diagnosis and management of persons living with MS that are underrepresented in clinical studies."

Dr. Nathoo's research is paving the way for more equitable, effective care for everyone living with MS. Thank you for fueling progress through research like this.

To learn more, visit **mscanada.ca/drnathoo**

New Report Highlights Urgent Need for Timely Care in MS Treatment

We're excited to announce the launch of the 2024 ***Brain Health — Time Matters*** report. This global report outlines recent advances in treatment and care while calling for urgent policy changes to improve outcomes for those living with neuroimmune diseases like MS.

Significant progress has been made since the first report was published in 2015, but gaps in care and treatment remain. Early diagnosis and intervention are critical, and this updated report emphasizes why time matters in protecting brain health.

Developed by a multidisciplinary team of global experts and supported by key partners, the report offers actionable recommendations to guide better care, faster diagnoses and greater support.

Visit **msbrainhealth.org** to download the full report and join the call for change.

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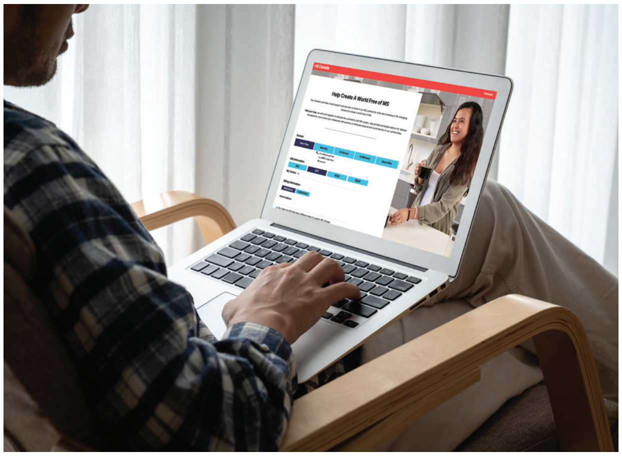

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