MS PROGRESS REPORT

Julie's Wellness Journey With MS

From the moment she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS), Julie made a conscious decision to face it head-on. With a background in epidemiology, the study of how diseases affect different populations, she was already deeply interested in clinical trials and the science behind symptom management. That same curiosity drives her today.

"I've learned that MS affects everyone differently, and treatments vary from person to person," Julie shares. "Through ongoing research and personal experience, I found that making important lifestyle changes really improved how I manage my MS."

Julie began incorporating daily movement into her life, focusing on modified exercises that target strength, balance and functional movement. Within just a few weeks, she started noticing real improvements. "Focusing more on movement not only strengthened my body, but also helped calm my mind and reduce my symptoms," she says. "Even though I still have moments when I doubt myself in public, my confidence and belief in my own abilities have grown so much."

Julie, living with MS for three years

Before her diagnosis, Julie was an avid walker who loved being outside. Today, she still enjoys regular walks and group fitness classes, though she's mindful of the unpredictability of MS. "I try to reserve weekends for rest and social activities that allow me to recharge and maintain a balance between my work and personal life," she explains.

In the three years since her diagnosis, Julie has found empowerment through knowledge and small, sustainable changes. "These tips come straight from my own personal journey with MS," she says. "I know that everyone's experience is unique, so what worked for me might not work for you — and that's okay!"

From prioritizing physical activity, maintaining good sleep hygiene and staying connected to her social network to incorporating better nutrition and regular outdoor time, Julie believes each change has brought her closer to a more balanced life. "While medical treatments are vital in managing MS, your lifestyle choices can also significantly enhance your quality of life."

Julie's hope is that her insights will help others feel more in control of their own MS journey.

> "If you feel discouraged, remember tomorrow is another opportunity for progress, says Julie."

"MS research has advanced greatly in the past two decades, and continued discoveries promise to bring even more treatment options to improve the lives of Canadians living with MS!"

With every step forward, Julie continues to advocate for informed self-care, community support and optimism for the future.

Message From the President

This spring, we're proud to share some of the incredible progress your support continues to make possible. Across Canada, researchers, healthcare professionals and people affected by MS are coming together to push boundaries. It's your generosity that fuels this momentum — and for that, we are deeply grateful.

In this issue of your ***MS Progress Report***, you'll meet Dr. Ruth Ann Marrie, a neurologist and researcher whose work focuses on how co-existing health conditions influence outcomes for people with MS. By identifying ways to improve care for both physical and cognitive symptoms, Dr. Marrie is helping drive more comprehensive, personalized treatment strategies.

You'll also read Julie's inspiring story about managing MS through mindful lifestyle changes, including daily movement, rest and building strong social connections. Her story is a powerful reminder that even small, consistent changes can make a big difference in living well with MS.

While Canada still has one of the highest rates of MS in the world, there is more hope today than ever before. **Thanks to your ongoing support, we are making meaningful progress in research, in care and in improving the lives of people living with MS across the country.**

Sincerely,

Pamela Valentine

Dr. Pamela Valentine
President and Chief Executive Officer
MS Canada

Small Habits Can Make a Big Impact

How to live well with MS

1. **Move your body**
   to boost physical and mental health
2. **Fuel yourself**
   with a balanced diet
3. **Get your vitamin D**
   to support bone, immune and nerve health
4. **Prioritize sleep**
   with a calm bedtime routine to restore your body
5. **Surround yourself**
   with supportive, positive relationships
6. **Step outside**
   and get some fresh air daily
7. **Balance activity**
   with rest to avoid burnout

Scan here or visit **mscanada.ca/wellness** to explore more resources.

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH Dr. Ruth Ann Marrie

Dr. Ruth Ann Marrie's path to becoming a leading MS researcher was shaped by a deep curiosity about the factors that influence health. A Professor of Medicine and Community Health Sciences, Dr. Marrie brings decades of experience in clinical care and epidemiological research to her work.

> "Research helps me to address questions that arise during my clinical work."
> —Dr. Marrie

After earning both her undergraduate and medical degrees, Dr. Marrie completed her neurology training, followed by a fellowship in MS. She later earned a PhD in Epidemiology, where she explored how coexisting health conditions intersect with MS.

"My research focuses on factors that influence the risk of developing MS, and factors that influence the outcomes of MS," Dr. Marrie explains. "I am particularly interested in how co-existing (comorbid) health conditions affect people with MS." This interest began when she studied infectious mononucleosis (EBV) in relation to MS.

Dr. Marrie's work is rooted in real-world clinical experience and the questions that come up during conversations with those she treats. "Whenever I am working in a clinical setting, there are questions that arise for which we do not have the answers, or issues that arise for which we lack optimal therapies," she says. "Research helps me to address these questions."

By studying the impact of chronic diseases, health behaviors and critical illness on people with MS, Dr. Marrie aims to improve care across all stages of the disease. **"Ultimately, I hope that the answers from my research will allow me to improve the care that we can deliver to people with MS,"** she says. "In particular, I hope that we can reduce worsening of physical and cognitive impairments and improve quality of life by targeting the care of co-existing health conditions."

The support of MS Canada has been instrumental throughout her research career. "I would not be able to conduct this work without the financial support from MS Canada," Dr. Marrie says.

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

Expanding Mental Health Support for People Living With MS

Why Creating Accessible Mental Health Resources Matters

Mental health is an essential part of overall well-being for people living with MS. Depression is a common symptom of MS, yet many individuals face barriers in accessing consistent, effective care tailored to their needs.

With funding from MS Canada, Dr. Robert Simpson and his team at the University of Toronto are working to close this gap. Their new research study will test whether an online Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program can support people with MS in managing depression and improving emotional well-being.

"People living with MS are at a higher risk of developing depression than other members of the population, which can negatively affect their day-to-day functioning," says Dr. Simpson. "While effective treatments exist, these are not always easily accessible. Our project aims to address this accessibility gap."

Dr. Simpson's research will yield necessary support for the MS community to alleviate and manage depressive symptoms. This work will be pivotal in increasing accessibility to resources for Canadians living with MS who experience depression, which will in turn improve the well-being of the MS community.

By creating a flexible, at-home option for mental health care, this project aims to empower people with MS to take an active role in managing their emotional health — regardless of where they live or what resources they have access to.

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

World MS Day Is Right Around the Corner!

World MS Day is officially observed on May 30, but activities take place throughout the month and into early June. As this time of solidarity and awareness approaches, we invite you to join the movement. Together, we can create a future where early detection and better care are within everyone's reach.

Visit **worldmsday.org/about** to learn more.

worldMSday

Take Action and Create Impact at MS Walk on May 31, 2026

Join us this May as our community made up of tens of thousands of Canadians walks together to show that no person living with MS is alone. Fundraise to make lives better for people living with MS. Register for MS Walk today as we walk toward living in a world free of MS!

Visit **mswalks.ca** to find your walk and register today!

MSWALK

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