

A Letter from the VA-SIG Chair

Dear MS Colleagues,

This edition of the *VA Signature* is a review of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) 2008 annual meeting. The meeting was informative and highlighted the changes occurring within the Department of Veterans Affairs, The MS Centers of Excellence (MSCOE), the VA-SIG and our supporting organizations, United Spinal Association (USA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

The level of care for our patients is progressing, and VA is standardizing care nationwide. The MSCOE are finalizing a handbook to provide guidelines for VA facilities and your input is needed. As professionals at the heart of patient care, you are a valuable resource on the day-to-day needs of your facility and patients. This will be the document that guides your daily activities. We would like our members to follow the handbook and provide the feedback to their respective MSCOE. Please contact your MSCOE and offer your support.

We sincerely thank Thomas Stripling and Vivian Beyda for their years of service, sage advice, and untiring support. PVA is moving MS care from the Research, Education and Practice Guidelines program, headed by Tom. USA is restructuring and Vivian will be dedicating her to time to the Congress of Spinal Cord Medicine and Rehabilitation. We will miss them tremendously.

The VA-SIG and the MSCOE are working closely to meet the needs of professionals and patients. We want to capitalize on the talents of our members to improve care at VA and we ask you to contribute your knowledge and experience in case presentations, articles, and conferences for patients and/or professionals. A list is available from the MSCOE.

One of potential biggest threats to our progress is down-turning economics. Our resources to pay CMSC dues and attending the annual meeting must be restructured. The VA-SIG, MSCOE, and CMSC worked diligently to get members to the conference this year. We thank USA, PVA, and the CMSC for their generous contributions. A committee will be organized for covering future costs.

To end on a positive note, I must discuss the last evening of the CMSC annual meeting. Clay Walker gave an impressive performance! This boundless energetic bundle of talent gave us a new perspective on both patients with MS and the physicians who treat them. Clay and Dr. Jerry Wolinsky brought down the house down with a Bob Marley tune and a rousing rendition of "Brick House." Don't miss next year. Please enjoy the review.

Sincerely,

Peggy A. Coffey, MD
peggy.coffey@va.gov
VA-SIG Chair

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For this Newsletter:
What would you like to see here?

Please SUBMIT:

- Forum topics
- Clinical questions
- Research topics
- Ongoing MS projects
- QI issues
- Outcome measurements
- Team initiatives
- Announcements

Please contact the VA-SIG*nature* editor, Deborah Downey, NP, at deborah.downey@va.gov.

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The following are the titles of presentations by VA authors at the recent CMSC meeting. Full abstracts are available at www.msca.org.

POSTERS

Epidemiologic Description of VA Multiple Sclerosis Surveillance Registry

Baltimore VAMC
William Culpepper, MS
Douglas Bradham, DrPH
Christopher Bever, MD
Dennis Bourdette, MD

Pure-Tone Hearing Sensitivity for Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis

Portland VAMC
M. Samantha Lewis, PhD
Michele Hutter, MS
David Lilly, PhD
Mary Fitzpatrick, NP
Dennis Bourdette, MD
Stephen Fausti, PhD

Age and Comorbidity in Veterans with Multiple Sclerosis

MS Center of Excellence East
Tzu-Yun McDowell, MA
William J. Culpepper, MA
Douglas D. Bradham, PhD

Relationship Between Magnetic Resonance Imaging T2 Lesion Localization and Sleep Disorders in Multiple Sclerosis

Baltimore VAMC
Olukemi Olugemo, MD
Min Zhan, PhD
William Culpepper, MA
Christopher Bever, MD
Mitchell Wallin, MD
Walter Royal III, MD

Serum 1,25-Dihydroxy- and 25-Hydroxyvitamin D Ratios Correlate with Peripheral Blood Regulatory T-Cell Percentages in Patients with Multiple Sclerosis

University of Maryland School of Medicine and Baltimore VAMC
Walter Royal III, MD
Younus Mia, PhD
Huifen Li, PhD

Veterans Affairs Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence Home Telehealth Project

Multiple Sclerosis Center of Excellence–West-VA Puget Sound Health Care System
Alice Sloan, MPH, MSW
Aaron Turner, PhD
Richard Buhner, MN, ARNP
Lore Martz, RN
Robert Kane, PhD, ABPP-Cn
Mitchell Wallin, MD, MPH
Heidi Maloni, PhD
Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Living with Advanced Multiple Sclerosis: Case Studies from One VA VA Connecticut Health Care System

Elizabeth Auld, PA-C, MSCS

Outcome Measurement for Outpatient Integrated Team Care for People with Multiple Sclerosis

VA Puget Sound Health Care System
Richard Buhner, MN, ARNP

Primary Care Psychology and Multiple Sclerosis: Integrated Treatment Approach

St. Louis VAMC
Sarah Wahl, PhD
Florian Thomas MD, PhD
Frederic Metzger, PhD

In addition, we would like to include for you in this issue some of the many opportunities for CEU/CME available for free. These are a result of the collaboration of both Centers of Excellence.

VA Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence DVD Satellite Programs — www.va.gov/ms

May 2008—MRI Guidelines for Diagnosing and Treating MS

Presenters:

Christopher Bever, Jr., MD
MSCOE, VA Maryland HCS

Dennis Bourdette, MD
MSCOE, Portland VAMC

or

Jack Simon, MD
Portland VAMC

Content:

Imaging applications for diagnosis
Understanding lesions w/imaging CMSC MRI Guidelines
Managing disease progression w/imaging
Patient vignettes

April 2008—Pain and Palliative Care in MS

Presenters:

Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH
MSCOE, VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle

Heidi Maloni, PhD, RN, APRN, BC-ANP
Washington, DC VAMC

David Gruenewald, MD
VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle

Dawn Ehde, PhD
University of Washington, Seattle

Content:

Types of pain and management strategies
Pharmacotherapy
Rehabilitation Psychological
Palliative care and pain management
Patient vignettes

March 2007—Advances in Treating Multiple Sclerosis

Presenters:

Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH
MSCOE, VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle

Christopher Bever, Jr, MD
MSCOE, VA Maryland HCS

Dennis Bourdette, MD
MSCOE, Portland VAMC

or

James Bowen, MD
Evergreen Medical Center, Kirkland, WA

Content:

VA services
Medications and disease activity
Patient Vignettes
Advances in DMTs
FDA & VA requirements for natalizumab

August 2006—Sexual Intimacy and Multiple Sclerosis

Presenters:

Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH
MSCOE, VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle

Scott E. Litwiller, MD, FACS
Urologic Specialists of Oklahoma, Tulsa

Deborah M. Miller, PhD, Director of Comprehensive Care
Cleveland Clinic Foundation

Content:

Provider and patient communication on sexual/medical issues
MS primary and secondary effects on sexual dysfunction
Impact of psychosocial effects on sexual function—
managing sexual problems

MS Case Conferences

Understanding & Dx

Differential Dx*

Jun 2006: Carney, Haselkorn

TNF Antagonists & Monoclonal Antibodies*

Dec 2006: Whitham

MS Overlaid on Spinal Cord Injury*

Jun 2006: Carney, Haselkorn

Natalizumab (Tysabri®)

Oct 2007: Maloni—East

Treating the Disease

Secondary Progressive*

Dec 2004: Whitham, Schaben

CAM*

Jun 2005: Whitham, Bourdette, Schaben, Lovera

Update on Clinical Tx Research

Jun 2008: Baumhefner

Update on MS Care

Jun 2008: Costello

VA MSCOE Website Articles—www.va.gov/ms

Understanding & Dx

McDonald Criteria

Use of MRI to Dx MS

Diagnosing MS Subtype

Diagnosing acute myelopathies

MRI Used in MS

Neuromyelitis Optica in MS

Acute Attacks: Definition and Dx

What is MS, Causes, Predictors

Self-Report Questionnaire: Fatigue & Sexual function

Kurtze EDSS

The Evolution of MS Lesion-cartoon

Treating the Disease

Decision to Use DMTs

Rx Guidelines for Avonex

Rx Guidelines for Betaseron

Rx Guidelines for Copaxone

Rx Guidelines for Novantrone

Rx Guidelines for Rebif

Treatments for acute attacks

Deciding which DMT to use w/chart

Disease Modifying Tx

Comparing DMTs w/chart

Def and Tx for acute attacks pts.

What to expect at multi-disc clinic

VA Requirements for Natalizumab

Natalizumab (Tysabri)

Reintroduction of Natalizumab for Tx

VA Initiation & Monitoring of

Natalizumab w/form

Study Results from Tx w/glatiramer acetate PPMS

Monoclonal Antibody Tx in MS

Natalizumab and Hepatotoxicity

Managing Associated Health Problems

Cognitive, Emotional & Psych*

Feb 2005: Bourdette, Lovera

Uveitis*

Apr 2005: Whitham, Suhler, Schaben

Bi-polar Disorder*

Apr 2006: Campbell, Mathews

Bladder Management*

Feb 2007: Gutierrez

Update on Fatigue Assessment*

Aug 2007: Goldish

Neuromyelitis Optica & TMO

Apr 2008: Kim

Optical Coherence Tomography

May 2008: Shin—East

Rehabilitation in MS

Nov 2007: Provance—East

Pressure Ulcers

Feb 2008: Tupah—East

MS Nursing

Mar 2008: Maloni—East

Managing Life Issues

Postural Support & Pulmonary Function*

Feb 2006: Herrero, Hall

Evaluation of Decision Making Capacity in Patients with MS*

Apr 2007: Combs

Independent Living for Individuals with Cognitive Impairment*

Mar 2008: Turner

*Independent study courses available for CMEs/CEUs July 1, 2008, on the VA LMS.

VA MSCOE Website Articles—www.va.gov/ms

Managing Associated Health Problems

Fatigue

Immunizations

Vaccinations

Depression

Bladder

Spasticity

Spasticity w/Intrathecal Baclofen

Fatigue and MS

Bowel Dysfunction

Dysphagia: Providers Guide to

Swallowing Problems

Visual Dysfunction

Fatigue, excerpt from VAKN Apr 05

Keep Cool: MS and Heat Tolerance

Pain and MS

Vitamin D and MS

Managing Life Issues

Summary of VA Services for SC Vets

Is it Time for Wheels?

Transporting a Scooter or power wheelchair

Occupational Therapy in MS Rehab

Vets w/MS Participate in Wheelchair Games

Selecting the Appropriate Mattress for People w/MS

Restoring Independence: VA

Driver Training

Rehabilitation Program, from Vanguard magazine

Exercise excerpt from Fatigue VAKN

Continued from page 3

May 2005—Treating Multiple Sclerosis: Making a Difference in Veterans' Lives

Presenters:

Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH
MSCOE, VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle

Christopher Bever, Jr., MD
MSCOE, VA Maryland HCS

Dennis Bourdette, MD
MSCOE, Portland VAMC

or

James Bowen, MD
MSCOE, VA Puget Sound HCS, Seattle

Program Content:

The pathogenesis of MS—Mechanism of action for MS therapies

Therapies for relapsing and secondary progressive MS

MS research and natalizumab—Update on future MS therapies

April 2005—Fatigue and the Cognitive Effects of Multiple Sclerosis

Presenters:

Lauren Krupp, MD
State University of New York at Stony Brook

Cinda Hugos, MS, PT
Oregon Health and Sciences University

Program Content:

Pharmaceutical side effects of DMTs and fatigue

Effective exercise and energy efficient programs

**STATISTICS FROM THE COEs
REGARDING WEBSITE TRAFFIC**

January–March Quarter Stats for Unique Visitors*

2008 5,143

2007 4,023

2006 1,896

**Individuals who visit the site during a particular reporting period; if they visit more than once, they are only counted the first time they visit.*