

World Brain Day 2021: a call to stop multiple sclerosis

The World Federation of Neurology (WFN) celebrates World Brain Day on every July 22, focusing on a different theme each year.¹ As highlighted in your Editorial,² the theme for this World Brain Day is “Stop Multiple Sclerosis” (video), and the WFN is working jointly with the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF), as well as with clinicians and experts affiliated with advocacy organisations throughout Asia and Oceania, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Many public awareness programmes and educational and social media activities are promoting the movement to stop multiple sclerosis, commencing July 22, 2021, and continuing until October, 2021.

Multiple sclerosis can occur at any age, but the mean age of diagnosis is 32 years—a time when many people are planning to have a family and are building careers. The impact of diagnosis on affected individuals and their families can be profound. Currently, there is no cure for multiple sclerosis, which means that people

live with the disease for many decades. Effective disease-modifying treatments are in use and can reduce the disabling effects appreciably, but costs preclude access for many people.

World Brain Day 2021 provides an opportunity to highlight the urgent need for early diagnosis and advocate for access to health care, education, and research, and, most importantly, access to effective treatments that can substantially reduce disability. We have compiled five key messages for multiple sclerosis on World Brain Day 2021 (panel).

We invite neurologists, neuroscientists, health professionals, trainees, technologists, advocacy bodies, patient support groups, and other activists to become part of the 2021 World Brain Day campaign. You can participate by posting our banner advertisement on your webpage and sharing our posts, messages, and videos with your friends and colleagues. You can partner with local neurology societies and organisations for the promotion of these activities. Please encourage people with multiple sclerosis and their caregivers to contribute by sharing their story via a short video message (less than 90 s) and emailing the video to wbd2021@wfneurology.org. You can

visit our websites (WFN and MSIF) and use the educational resources freely available for you to lead a successful World Brain Day campaign at your institution or organisation this year.

We encourage readers of *The Lancet Neurology* to join us with our ambitious campaign to “Stop Multiple Sclerosis”. Let us work together to build a better world with better brain health.

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- 1 Wijeratne T, Grisold W, Dodick D, Carroll W. World Brain Day 2019: migraine, the painful truth. *The Lancet Neurology* 2019; **18**: 914.
- 2 The Lancet Neurology. Multiple sclerosis under the spotlight. *The Lancet Neurology* 2021; **20**: 497.
- 3 Walton C, King R, Rechtman L, et al. Rising prevalence of multiple sclerosis worldwide: Insights from the Atlas of MS, third edition. *Mult Scler* 2020; **26**: 1816–21.



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For the **World Brain Day 2021 toolkit** see <https://wfneurology.org/world-brain-day-2021>

For more on **The World Federation of Neurology** see <https://wfneurology.org/>

See Online for video

For more on the **Multiple Sclerosis International Federation** see <https://www.msif.org/>

For more on the **epidemiology of multiple sclerosis** see <https://www.atlasofms.org/chart/united-kingdom/epidemiology/average-age-people-start-to-develop-ms>

Panel: Key messages for World Brain Day 2021

Disability

Multiple sclerosis can be a debilitating neurological disease that affects every aspect of a person's life, with effects ranging from cognitive impairment to substantial physical disability.

Prevalence

Globally, about 2.8 million people have multiple sclerosis.³

Education

We must work with health-care professionals to recognise the signs and symptoms of multiple sclerosis so people can be diagnosed early and treated effectively.

Access to treatment

Disease-modifying treatments slow disease progression, dramatically improving the quality of life for those living with multiple sclerosis, yet access to these medications is unavailable in many parts of the world.

Advocacy

We can help stop multiple sclerosis by diagnosing people earlier, providing better access to life-changing treatments, and advocating for improving the quality of life for those living with the disease and their caregivers.