RiMS Abstract Book

31st Annual Rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis Conference

Theme: Recovery and Compensation in Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation: Rethinking Mechanisms, Decisions, and Outcomes

11-13 June 2026, Prague, Czech Republic

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Conference Rationale

Multiple sclerosis rehabilitation increasingly requires explicit choices between strategies that aim to restore function (recovery) and strategies that optimise performance through adaptation (compensation).

These are not competing philosophies but clinically meaningful options whose relative value depends on disease stage, functional reserve, goals, context, and available technologies.

The 2026 programme connects biological mechanisms (neuroplasticity and reserve) to intervention design, precision decision-making, and outcomes that matter to people with multiple sclerosis - especially participation, autonomy, and quality of life.

By integrating multidisciplinary perspectives (medicine, therapy professions, psychology/neuropsychology, engineering, and outcomes research), the Conference aims to advance implementable, evidence-based rehabilitation pathways aligned with European priorities on digital health, real-world outcomes, and personalised care.

Table of Contents (short)

CONFERENCE RATIONALE 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS (SHORT) 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS (LONG) 4

MEASURING RECOVERY & COMPENSATION & PROGRESSION, INCL. BIOMARKERS IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 10

MOTOR RECOVERY AND ADAPTIVE COMPENSATION IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 34

PARTICIPATION, AUTONOMY & LIFE ROLES, INCL. BLADDER AND BOWEL AND SEXUALITY IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 65

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND COGNITIVE REHABILITATION IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 91

FINAL CATEGORY: REHABILITATION OF COMMUNICATION AND SWALLOWING IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 113

TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED REHABILITATION IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 115

INVITED LECTURES 141

WORKSHOPS IN NEUROREHABILITATION 149

TEACHING COURSES 153

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS 156

ABSTRACT REVIEWERS 161

Table of Contents (long)

CONFERENCE RATIONALE **3**

TABLE OF CONTENTS (SHORT) **3**

TABLE OF CONTENTS (LONG) **4**

MEASURING RECOVERY & COMPENSATION & PROGRESSION, INCL. BIOMARKERS IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS **10**

5 Swimming exercise modulates pro-inflammatory cytokines in a mousemodel of multiple sclerosis 10
8 Brain activation during motor-cognitive navigated walking in people with Multiple Sclerosis, in comparison with healthy controls 11
15 Observational Gait Analysis Tools in Multiple Sclerosis: A COSMIN Meta-Analysis for Psychometric Properties 12
17 Feasibility and Clinical Application of Wearable IMU Sensors to Assess Gait, Balance, and Fatigue in Multiple Sclerosis 13
23 Intra- and Inter-Hemispheric Connectivity and Clinical Worsening in Multiple Sclerosis 14
24 Structural Neural Correlates of Electronic Symbol-Digit Modalities Test Performance in people with Multiple Sclerosis 15
26 Enhancing the Value of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment as a Screening Tool for Multiple Sclerosis-Related Cognitive Impairment 16
32 CYPRO – High-intensive cycling in primary progressive Multiple Sclerosis 17
35 Psychometric properties of 31 assessment tools for MS: what works, what doesn't, and what captures change 18
44 Linking Rehabilitation and Molecular Signatures: lncRNA Changes in MS Patients Undergoing VR-Supported Therapy 19
45 Physiotherapy-Induced Functional and Immunological Changes in People with Multiple Sclerosis: Benefits of VR Integration 20
46 Smart NHPT for Motor and Cognitive Profiling in MS 21
49 Impact of Information Processing Speed on Episodic Memory in Multiple Sclerosis: Insights from Survival Analysis 22
50 Depression screening in multiple sclerosis rehabilitation: comparing BDI-II and BDI-FS for clinically relevant assessment 23
51 Autonomic stress reactivity in multiple sclerosis: implications for emotional functioning and rehabilitation assessment 24
72 Tracking physical activity in multiple sclerosis: Accelerometer vs. self-report measures across the disability spectrum 25
80 Aerobic fitness and fatigue-related measures differentially relate to motor cortex excitability and inhibition in mildly disabled people with multiple sclerosis: a TMS study 26
100 Chair Rise Muscle Power in Multiple Sclerosis: Implications of Disability Status and Sex 27
104 Cortical activity mechanisms underlying walking fatigability in people with multiple sclerosis: an fNIRS study 28
106 A Novel Clinical Test to Detect Subtle Mobility Deficits in Mild MS: Measurement Properties of the Walking Adaptability Ladder Test 29
111 Patient-Reported Measures in Multiple Sclerosis: A Network Analysis for Stratification and Outcomes Assessment 30
128 Establishing reliable change indices for cognitive and motor screening in Multiple Sclerosis: Implications for clinical practice 31
130 Are versions of 12-Item Multiple Sclerosis Walking Scale structurally valid? a COSMIN Systematic Review 32
132 Rehabilitation-Related Changes in Resting-State Functional Connectivity in People with Multiple Sclerosis: A Controlled Pre-Post fMRI Study 33

MOTOR RECOVERY AND ADAPTIVE COMPENSATION IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 34

10 Mechanisms underlying exercise-induced pain modulation in people with multiple sclerosis – a scoping review 34
11 Dynamic adaptation responses to auditory perturbations during walking in multiple sclerosis with progressive subtypes. 36
20 Complexity of falls in people with Multiple Sclerosis 37
28 Comparison of the blood lactate profile of low- and moderate fit people with multiple sclerosis to healthy controls 38
29 The effect of hippotherapy on postural control of the trunk in Multiple Sclerosis: a pilot study 39
30 Impact of a Theoretical–Practical Program on Fatigue, Performance, and Quality of Life in People with Multiple Sclerosis 40
38 How motor and cognitive ability affect motor-cognitive performance in people with multiple sclerosis 41
40 Investigating the impact of motor fatigability on cognition and balance in people with Multiple Sclerosis 42
41 Brain activity and connectivity are increased in fatigued people with multiple sclerosis during a static balance task: a fNIRS study 43
47 An Outpatient Rehabilitation Programme for People with Multiple Sclerosis: A Pilot Study 44
53 MS-ACT: a concept for severely affected patient with multiple sclerosis 45
55 The Approach of the Bobath Concept in the recovery of the upper limb in patients with multiple sclerosis: A case report (using the MBCP model) 46
60 Pain severity is associated with physical activity, exercise participation, and health-related quality of life in people with multiple sclerosis. 47
64 Clinical Approach to Balance Intensity in People with Multiple Sclerosis: Clinical Judgment versus the Balance Intensity Tool for Exercise 48
74 The cost of imbalance: How balance problems drive energy cost of walking in persons with Multiple Sclerosis 49
77 Feasibility of high intensity task oriented circuit training in people with severe multiple sclerosis-related disability 50
83 Effects of a new complex intervention compared to usual care on physical functions and work barriers in employed people with multiple sclerosis: a randomized controlled trial 51
84 Patient-reported polysymptomatology in persons with multiple sclerosis at the Danish MS Hospitals. 52
86 Repetitive Acute Intermittent Hypoxia Improves Ankle Strength and Walking Endurance in People with Multiple Sclerosis 53
91 Non-Invasive Neuromodulation Transforms Rehabilitation Outcomes in Progressive Multiple Sclerosis: A Systematic Review 54
92 Dose-response effects of supervised power-oriented resistance training on lower extremity muscle power and physical function in people with multiple sclerosis – secondary data from the NEXIMS randomized controlled trial 55
93 Disruptions in one's own body perception in people with multiple sclerosis 56
96 Feasibility and Outcomes of a 6-Month Exercise & Wellness Program in Community-Dwelling Persons with Multiple Sclerosis: A Cohort Observational Study 57
98 Can adapted physical activity provide valuable complementary support when physiotherapy offers benefits for a intermittent period? Preliminary results from a prospective observational pilot study. 58
102 Effects of Neuromuscular Exercise Training Focused on the Upper Extremity on Physical and Cognitive Functions in People with Multiple Sclerosis (NExTUp): A Randomized Controlled Trial 59
105 Brain and core temperature changes with a neck cooling collar in heat-sensitive people with Multiple Sclerosis 60
110 Immediate Effects of Combined Action Observation and Motor Imagery on Spatiotemporal Gait in Multiple Sclerosis 61

112 How to encourage increased physical activity in newly diagnosed patients? 62
115 The effects of trunk rehabilitation on balance, gait, falls, and communitymobility in patients with multiple sclerosis: A single-blind randomizedcontrolled trial 63
122 The Effects of Structured Exercise Training on Functional and Cognitive Trajectories in Newly Diagnosed Multiple Sclerosis 64

PARTICIPATION, AUTONOMY & LIFE ROLES, INCL. BLADDER AND BOWEL AND SEXUALITY IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 65

1 Balancing participation and fall risk – a constant ongoing process 65
3 Development and Validation of the questionnaire for bladder and bowel symptoms screening in MS patients 66
6 Development, validation and clinical use of MS bladder check – A patient self-assessment tool to promote timely treatment of bladder problems 67
7 Exploring Community Mobility in Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis: A Qualitative Study 68
14 Transanal irrigation (TAI) practices in Dutch Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients – a retrospective survey 69
21 Evaluation of an Online Nutrition Program (NutriMS-Plus) for People with Multiple Sclerosis: Results from a randomized controlled pilot trial (pilot RCT) 70
36 What matters to whom? Identifying patient priority profiles in short-term MS rehabilitation. 71
37 Developing a Shared Multidisciplinary Vision on Positioning in Multiple Sclerosis: Baseline Evaluation, Training Pathway and Implementation Strategy 72
52 Beyond Mobility: An AI-Enabled Personalized Narrative Intervention to Address Family Participation in Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation - Case Study. 73
56 Social Participation Through Attendance at Concert Performances in Rehabilitation 74
58 Access to Inpatient Medical and Rehabilitation Care for Patients with Multiple Sclerosis: A Nationwide French Analysis Using the SNDS (2017–2023) 75
59 Development and validation of the Multiple Sclerosis Autonomy Scale (MSAS) 76
62 Management of Heat Sensitivity in Persons with MS: A Cross-sectional Analysis of a Survey Conducted by the Swiss Multiple Sclerosis Registry 77
65 Understanding Productivity Loss in Multiple Sclerosis: Indirect Costs, Work-Related Quality of Life, and Resource Use 78
70 Implementation Science Approach to an Interdisciplinary Vocational Rehabilitation Model for Multiple Sclerosis: A CFIR-Informed Evaluation of the RiaL SM Project 79
78 Experiential knowledge shapes People-Centred Innovation and strengthens resilience, agency, and life roles in People with Multiple Sclerosis 80
97 Quality of life (QOL) in an employed population of people with multiple sclerosis and effects of a complex intervention directed at physical functioning, physical activity, work and QOL. 81
99 "It's like adding another layer": Women's experiences of menopause as a disruptive transition in multiple sclerosis 82
117 Difficulties in coping with temperature changes in people with multiple sclerosis 83
119 Beyond symptom management – What people with MS value in physiotherapy and occupational therapy. 84
123 Prevalence of pelvic floor dysfunction and interest in rehabilitation 85
125 The NBD-MS instrument – a new tool to assess neurogenic bowel dysfunction and its invisible burden, in people with Multiple Sclerosis. 86
127 PM&R-Led Multidisciplinary Coordination: Implementing an ICF Based Model to Optimize Rehabilitation Pathways in Multiple Sclerosis 88
129 Defining individual nursing objectives with MS patients in an interdisciplinary and shared decision-making rehabilitation setting 89
151 Anorectal Dysfunction in Multiple Sclerosis: Individualized Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Perspectives 90

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND COGNITIVE REHABILITATION IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 91

9 Representation matters: A review of the current state of diversity and inclusivity within multiple sclerosis clinical trials of neuropsychological rehabilitation 91
16 Beyond Balance: The Role of Body Trust in Fear of Falling in Multiple Sclerosis ... 92
18 Assessing unmet social needs in multiple sclerosis care in Australia: a qualitative assessment of feasibility, barriers and enablers. 93
25 Developing UK normative data for two online cognitive screening tasks to support routine neuropsychological screening in Multiple Sclerosis clinics 94
33 Vocational Rehabilitation for workers with MS in the Italian context: feasibility and explorative results 95
42 Don't be late! Qualitative process evaluation of a preventative work coaching intervention for people with multiple sclerosis 96
43 CALM – Creating Awareness and Lasting Management of Overstimulation in people with multiple sclerosis and functional neurological disorder 97
48 Home-Based Serious Games to Improve Cognition in Multiple Sclerosis: A Randomized Trial 98
68 Understanding Work-Related Difficulties in People with Multiple Sclerosis: A Person-Centered Approach 99
69 READY FOR MS (MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS): DEVELOPMENT, FEASIBILITY TRIAL AND PILOT STUDY OF AN ACT-BASED ONLINE INTERVENTION FOR PATIENTS WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS 100
71 Body Image, Interoceptive Awareness and Psychological Factors in People with Multiple Sclerosis 101
73 Living with Advanced Multiple Sclerosis: A Qualitative Study of Psychosocial Challenges 102
79 Sex differences in coping strategies among caregivers of people with multiple sclerosis: a cross-sectional study 103
82 REMOTE-MS: Synchronous Cognitive Telerehabilitation for People with Multiple Sclerosis 104
85 Unraveling Exercise Response to Fatigue in People with Multiple Sclerosis – who benefits and why? Secondary analysis from the MSBOOST trial. 105
89 A new way to communicate with the disease - the role of personification in emotional and functional aspects in MS: A longitudinal point of view. 106
90 Wartime stress and relapse risk in people with multiple sclerosis: a prospective cohort study 107
108 Exploring the cognitive care provision of the multiple sclerosis population attending a single- centre multiple sclerosis Unit in Ireland across a ten-year time period. 108
116 An Occupational Therapy Group Intervention to Address Sleep Disturbances in Individuals with MS 109
118 Translating Research into Practice: Occupational Therapy for Multiple Sclerosis 110
120 Neuropsychological Interventions in Progressive Multiple Sclerosis: A Systematic Review 111
126 Using virtual reality to detect cognitive fatigability in daily-life tasks for persons with MS: a feasibility study 112

FINAL CATEGORY: REHABILITATION OF COMMUNICATION AND SWALLOWING IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 113

76 Exploring the Clinical Utility of DYMUS and EAT-10 in Speech Therapy for Oropharyngeal Dysphagia in Multiple Sclerosis: A Pilot Study 113

TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED REHABILITATION IN MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND RELATED DISORDERS 115

2 Smoking Cessation Intervention for People with Multiple Sclerosis: Results of a Feasibility Study 115
4 EXOPULSE Mollii Suit Improves Balance and Mobility, Reduces Spasticity and Enhances Quality of Life: A Randomized-Controlled Trial in Multiple Sclerosis 116

12 Quantitative assessment of the efficacy of an innovative telerehabilitation protocol AI-driven 117
19 Do People with Multiple Sclerosis Accept Humanoid Social Robots? Insights from a Human–Robot Interaction Study 118
27 AI-based telerehabilitation for multiple sclerosis: feasibility and usability in a multicenter pilot study 119
31 Integrating Rehabilitation into the Electronic Health Record in Multiple Sclerosis: The Smart FSE Multicenter Initiative 120
39 Implementing a digital platform to support in-patient rehabilitation service 121
54 A Technological System for the Assessment of Motor and Cognitive Functions during Activities of Daily Living in People with Multiple Sclerosis 122
57 A multimodal digital lifestyle intervention in people with multiple sclerosis: is it all about the money? A cost-effectiveness evaluation 123
63 BrainMotion MS: a digital dual-task rehabilitation application for people with multiple sclerosis – user experience 124
66 An IMU-based approach to assess inter- and intra-limb coordination during the six-minute walking test in people with Multiple Sclerosis 125
75 The Gestus Project: Automated Outdoor Motion Capture for Neurorehabilitation with Wearable GNSS–IMU Sensors 126
81 Distinct cognitive–motor prioritization strategies in multiple sclerosis: a dual-task cost clustering approach 127
88 Innovative virtual reality software implementing principles of neurophysiological rehabilitation improves the upper limb function and quality of life in people with Multiple Sclerosis 128
94 Development of a Machine Learning Model to Detect High Risk Near Falls in People with Multiple Sclerosis During Volitional Stepping Training 129
95 Intermittent Negative Pressure Reduces Spinal Excitability in Multiple Sclerosis: Neurophysiological Evidence from Soleus H-Reflex Modulation 130
101 The effect of unsupervised home based balance exercise versus individual physiotherapy 131
103 Smart Light, Slow Response: Assessing Upper Extremity Reaction Time in People with Multiple Sclerosis Using BlazePod – A Tech-Based Preliminary Study 132
107 Use of the Exopulse Mollii Suit in People with Multiple Sclerosis: Effects on Upper and Lower Limb Function 133
109 Feasibility of Intensive Visual Stimulation for Upper Limb Rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis 134
113 Perceptive Sensitivity and Accuracy to Walking Speed Dynamics During a 6-Minute-Walk Test in Individuals with Mild Disability due to Multiple Sclerosis and Healthy Controls 135
114 Assessment of Perception Accuracy for Sit-To-Stand Exercise using a sensorized Chair in Individuals with mild disability due to Multiple Sclerosis and Healthy Controls 136
121 Robot-assisted gait training versus conventional physiotherapy in moderate-to-severe multiple sclerosis: a randomized controlled trial 137
124 Effects of Walking Exercise with or without Closed-Loop Rhythmic Cueing on Spatiotemporal Gait Parameters at Self-Selected Pace in Individuals with MS and Walking Limitations. 138
131 Home-based telerehabilitation as continuity of care after intensive rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis: preliminary results of a pilot randomized controlled trial 139
133 Effects of a Multimodal Exercise Programme on Disability, Physical Acitivity, Fatigue, and Quality of Life in People with Multiple Sclerosis: An Assessor-Blinded Randomized Controlled Study 140

INVITED LECTURES 141

137 Recovery versus Compensation in MS: A False Dichotomy or a Necessary Distinction? 141
138 Mechanism-Based Physiotherapy for Functional Recovery in Multiple Sclerosis. 142
139 Psychological Determinants of Work Instability in MS 143

140 Invisible Disorders in MS: Communication and Swallowing Challenges Across Daily Life 144
141 Technology-Assisted Rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis: Towards Personalized, Evidence-Based Care 145
142 Assessing Recovery, Compensation, and Progression in MS: Integrating Clinical, Digital, and Contextual Outcomes 146
143 The Meaning of Recovery and Compensation: Raising Awareness and Standardized Management of Urogenital Problems in Persons with Multiple Sclerosis 147
144 Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation: Lessons Learned and Futures Imagined 148

WORKSHOPS IN NEUROREHABILITATION 149

144 The Bobath Concept in Neurorehabilitation 149
145 Digital Biomarkers: Inertial Sensor Technology for Upper Limb Tremor and Automated Speech Analysis 150
146 rTMS, tDCS, and Vibramoov: Tools for Motor Recovery 151
147 Virtual reality in rehabiltation in People with Mulptiple sclerosis; hands on workshop 152

TEACHING COURSES 153

148 Practical Application of theInternational Classification ofFunctioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Set in Clinical Practicefor People with Multiple Sclerosis 153
149 Possibilities of the Vojta Method in Patients with Multiple Sclerosis 154
150 Rehabilitation Solutions for Severely Disabled Persons 155

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS 156

Special Interest Groups Mood & Cognition and Mobility 156
Special Interest Group Occupation 157
Special Interest Group Communication and Swallowing 158
Special Interest Group Bladder, Bowel and Sexuality 159
Special Interest Group Patient Autonomy 160

ABSTRACT REVIEWERS 161

Measuring recovery & compensation & progression, incl. biomarkers in Multiple Sclerosis and related disorders

Recovery, compensation, and progression follow different trajectories – improvement, adaptation, and often hidden decline – and each asks for its own way of being measured. The measure we choose confirms what we observe, supports our treatment, and serves as a guide for our conversation with the person in front of us. This chapter explores this challenge across clinical, digital, and people-centred perspectives, that show how thoughtful measurement reshapes everyday rehabilitation.

5 Swimming exercise modulates pro-inflammatory cytokines in a mousemodel of multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Brain inflammation, particularly elevated cytokines such as TNF-α and IL-1β, plays a key role in the onset and progression of multiple sclerosis (MS). Exercise is recognised as a safe, natural method to support brain health and reduce inflammation in MS. This study examined the effect of four weeks of moderate swimming exercise on inflammatory cytokines (TNF-α and IL-1β) and fatigue- and motivation-related behaviours in female C57BL/6 mice with experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE), an established model of MS. Twenty-one female mice were assigned to three groups: Healthy Control (HC) (n = 7), EAE Control (EAE) (n = 7), and EAE + swimming exercise (EAE+EX) (n = 7). EAE was induced with the MOG35–55 peptide. The EAE+EX swam for 30 min/day, five days/week for four weeks. After training, brain tissue was collected to measure TNF-α and IL-1β via Western blot.

The open field test (OFT) and sucrose preference test (SPT) assessed locomotor and motivation-related behaviours.

EAE significantly increased TNF-α and IL-1β versus HC ($P < 0.05$). Swimming reduced both cytokines and improved movement and exploration in the OFT ($P < 0.05$), but not SPT performance. Four weeks of moderate swimming reduced brain inflammation and improved locomotor behaviour in EAE mice, suggesting swimming as a safe complementary strategy for managing MS-related inflammation and fatigue.

8 Brain activation during motor-cognitive navigated walking in people with Multiple Sclerosis, in comparison with healthy controls

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Abstract

Background: Neurological impairment in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) compromises motor-cognitive activity performance, but the underlying mechanisms and neural correlates remain poorly understood.

Objective: To explore motor-cognitive performance and corresponding brain activation during motor-cognitive navigated-walking in PwMS, in comparison with healthy controls (HC).

Methods: Thirty-eight PwMS (woman=66%; mean age=54 years) and 39 matched HC were included. The motor task navigated-walking was measured using wearable sensors, and in the number of navigation errors and hesitations. The cognitive task auditory-Stroop was measured in response-time and accuracy. In the complex condition two tasks were performed simultaneously. Functional near-infrared spectroscopy was used to measure brain activation over prefrontal areas. Effect of change, from separately to simultaneously performed tasks, was calculated and reported in percent for the motor and cognitive measures (complex effect).

Results: In both groups, navigated-walking speed was slower during the complex condition (complex effect PwMS=-3.6%; HC=-1.4%), response-time was longer (complex effect PwMS=7.6%; HC=4.5), and made more navigation errors and hesitations (PwMS=10.5%; HC=2.6%). PwMS walked slower, had longer response-time, and made more navigation errors and hesitations during both separate and complex conditions compared to HC. HC increased brain activation in Brodmann Area 46 during the complex condition ($p<.001$), but not PwMS.

Conclusions: Complex walking had effect on both motor and cognitive task performance for both groups although PwMS had almost twice as large effect. This might be due to inability to recruit or compensate with prefrontal activation. Future research should explore at what level of workload PwMS reaches this plateau of brain activation.

15 Observational Gait Analysis Tools in Multiple Sclerosis: A COSMIN Meta-Analysis for Psychometric Properties

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Abstract

Introduction: Observational gait analysis (OGA) tools are widely used due to their simplicity, low cost, and feasibility. However, the psychometric properties of OGA tools remain unclear.

Objective: To conduct a systematic review and meta-analysis investigating psychometric properties of OGA tools in Multiple Sclerosis.

Methods: COnsensus-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement Instruments (COSMIN) guidelines were followed. COSMIN psychometric properties involve Validity (Content, Structural, Criterion, cross-cultural and Construct), Reliability (Internal Consistency, reliability and Measurement Error), and Responsiveness. The measurement Property for the will be rated as sufficient (+), insufficient (-), or indeterminate (?) using COSMIN criteria for good measurement properties. The recommendations for scales were mainly based on content validity and internal consistency.

Results: There were five included articles involving 3 OGA tools; Gait Assessment and Intervention tool (G.A.I.T), Tinetti Gait Scale (TGS), and Rivermead Visual Gait Assessment (RVGA). Structural validity, internal consistency and measurement invariance were not evaluated in any one of included scale. G.A.I.T show sufficient content validity, reliability, and construct validity while measurement error and criterion validity were not sufficient. TGS showed sufficient content validity and insufficient construct validity. Finally, RVGA showed sufficient content validity and responsiveness. All included OGA have potential for recommendation. WGS has the best potential.

Conclusion: No OGA tool is currently recommended due to absent of evidence for unidimensionality and internal consistency. Further studies are highly required especially structural validity and internal consistency.

17 Feasibility and Clinical Application of Wearable IMU Sensors to Assess Gait, Balance, and Fatigue in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) frequently results in fatigue as well as impairments in gait and balance, which affect functional mobility and quality of life. Wearable inertial measurement units (IMUs) provide an opportunity to objectively quantify these functions in clinical and research settings. This project aims to implement the Opal Mobility Lab to support clinical decision-making and advance research on digital biomarkers of mobility and fatigue in two phases. 1) To evaluate feasibility and implementation in a rehabilitation setting, 2) to investigate the relationships between postural sway parameters, gait characteristics, and fatigue in people with MS (PwMS).

Phase 1 is a pragmatic mixed-methods pilot study including 20 PwMS and 6–10 therapists. Participants will undergo a single standardized assessment using six IMU sensors while performing a 6-Minute Walk Test, an instrumented Timed Up and Go Test and a postural sway assessment. Questionnaires assess usability and comfort. Qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

Phase 2 is an observational study including 60–80 PwMS. During a single assessment, sway and gait sensor-derived parameters, and fatigue measures will be obtained using the Modified Fatigue Impact Scale, Walking Fatigability Index, and Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion. The primary objective is to examine associations between sway parameters and gait characteristics, with secondary analyses exploring relationships with physical and perceived fatigue. Statistical analyses will include normality testing, correlation analyses, multivariate modelling, and subgroup analyses.

This project will allow more accurate, objective monitoring of MS symptoms and optimizing personalized rehabilitation programs.

23 Intra- and Inter-Hemispheric Connectivity and Clinical Worsening in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction. Brain connectivity is an important determinant of disability in multiple sclerosis (MS). It fluctuates across the disease course and can lead to “network collapse”, causing functional deficits. We investigated how changes in short- and long-range connectivity within the sensorimotor network (SMN) contribute to disability and physical performance worsening in MS.

Methods. We studied 100 MS patients and 89 healthy controls (HC), who underwent 3.0-Tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and clinical evaluation, including Nine-Hole Peg Test (9-HPT), Timed 25-Foot Walk Test (T25FWT), and Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS). MS patients were reassessed after one year. Clinical worsening was defined using the EDSS-Plus (EDSS progression or ≥20% deterioration in 9-HPT or T25FWT). Group comparisons between HC and MS, and between stable/worsened MS patients, evaluated functional connectivity (FC) and structural connectivity (SC) of the SMN at intra- and inter-hemispheric levels.

Results. MS patients presented low disability levels (median EDSS=1.5) and had worse baseline motor performance ($p \leq 0.001$) compared with HC. They showed reduced inter-hemispheric SMN SC ($p \leq 0.001$), while other connectivity measures did not differ. After one year, 36 patients were classified as worsened by EDSS-Plus. No baseline demographic or clinical differences emerged between stable and worsened patients. However, worsened patients showed higher intra-hemispheric SMN SC at baseline ($p=0.013$), which significantly decreased at follow-up ($p=0.006$). No differences were observed in other SMN connectivity measures.

Conclusion. SMN connectivity evolves nonlinearly in MS. Inter-hemispheric SC disruption appears early, while increased intra-hemispheric connectivity may reflect compensatory reorganization and is associated with subsequent clinical worsening.

24 Structural Neural Correlates of Electronic Symbol-Digit Modalities Test Performance in people with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background. Electronic Symbol-Digit Modalities Test (SDMT) adaptations could improve diagnosis and monitoring of cognitive impairment in people with MS (pwMS). Associations with brain features (construct validity), however, lack extensive validation.

Objective. To explore structural brain correlates of performance to digital cognitive testing in pwMS.

Methods. N=30 pwMS underwent cognitive testing with a validated electronic SDMT (eSDMT) and oral SDMT, as well as 3D T1-weighted and FLAIR brain MRI imaging with a 3T scanner. Brain volumetrics were obtained using icobrain ms v.5.17.1 (icometrix, Leuven, Belgium), a CE-marked software for automatic segmentation and quantification of brain structures. We computed robust Spearman correlations between eSDMT/oral SDMT score and lesion volumes or normalized brain volumetrics of cognition-related brain structures (whole brain volume [WBV], cortical lobes, thalamus), adjusting for age and education and correcting for multiple comparisons (Bonferroni-Holm).

Results. eSDMT score correlated with WBV (r=0.709, p=0.005) and volumes of FLAIR-hyperintense lesions (r=-0.654, p=0.005), T1-hypointense lesions (r=-0.634, p=0.005), frontal cortex (r=0.514, p=0.007), parietal cortex (r=0.569, p=0.006), thalamus (r=0.478, p=0.018), and cerebrospinal fluid spaces (r=-0.482, p=0.009). Oral SDMT score also correlated with WBV (r=0.623, p=0.006), volumes of FLAIR-hyperintense lesions (r=-0.670, p=0.006), T1-hypointense lesions (r=-0.701, p=0.005) and parietal cortex (r=0.494, p=0.023), but not frontal cortex (r=0.266, p=0.198), thalamus (r=0.377, p=0.056) or cerebrospinal fluid (r=0.381, p=0.144).

Conclusion. eSDMT performance is associated with cognition-related brain imaging biomarkers in pwMS, with potential superiority for detecting atrophy, compared to the gold-standard oral SDMT. This supports its use for longitudinal monitoring of clinical and radiological progression, warranting longitudinal investigation.

26 Enhancing the Value of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment as a Screening Tool for Multiple Sclerosis-Related Cognitive Impairment

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Abstract

Background. The Brief International Assessment of Cognition for MS (BICAMS) is the gold-standard cognitive screening tool for people with MS (pwMS). However, studies showed that non-MS-specific screening tools like the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) are much more frequently used in real-world clinical practice, even for pwMS.

Objective. To improve the detection of MS-related cognitive impairment (CI) using the MoCA.

Methods. N=215 pwMS underwent a neuropsychological examination including both MoCA and BICAMS, at Casa di Cura Igea, Milan, Italy, between Jan-2023 and Feb-2026. MS-related CI was defined as 1+ BICAMS score<1.5 SD from the normative mean. First, we evaluated MS-related CI classification accuracy of three MoCA cutoffs based on published Italian normative data. Then, we trained a machine learning (ML) pipeline with age, education, and MoCA score as predictors, and MS-related CI as binary outcome.

Results. Our sample included predominantly female (N=129, 60%), progressive (N=149, 69%) pwMS, with mean±SD age=54.78±9.75 years, mean education=13.79±5.06 years, median (1^{st}–3^{rd} quartile) EDSS=6.5 (6-6.5). N=72 (33.5%) had MS-related CI. All three normative MoCA cutoffs showed extreme specificity (97%, 94%, 99%) and below-chance sensitivity (31%, 39%, 8%). ML-based predictions greatly improved sensitivity (68%) and maintained good specificity (80%).

Conclusion. All published Italian normative MoCA cutoffs demonstrated insufficient sensitivity to MS-related CI. This translates to numerous false negatives in everyday clinical practice, likely leading to therapeutic delays. Our ML pipeline specifically trained on data from pwMS enhances the value of MoCA as a screening tool for MS-related CI, by allowing earlier detection of CI.

32 CYPRO – High-intensive cycling in primary progressive Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Endurance training improves MSers health-related quality of life (HRQoL), symptoms and performance. High-intensity interval training (HIIT) induces superior effects compared to moderate-intensity continuous training (MCT). Generalizability to persons with primary progressive MS (pwPPMS) remains unclear due to mixed MS phenotypes in existing studies. CYPRO evaluates the effects of HIIT compared to MCT in pwPPMS.

In this randomized-controlled trial, 43 pwPPMS (EDSS≤6) completed volume-matched HIIT or MCT sessions on a bicycle-ergometer three times per week during their inpatient stay at the Valens clinic. The primary outcome was cardiorespiratory fitness. Secondary outcomes include peak power output, walking capacity, cognitive performance, HRQoL, fatigue, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and blood-derived biomarkers. Outcomes are measured at baseline and discharge after three weeks. Endpoints were analyzed using a baseline-adjusted ANCOVA.

A significant time×group effect was observed for $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$ (p=0.002; 95%-CI:[0.46, 1.82]) with greater values in the HIIT group than in the MCT group. There were significant main effects of time for peak power output (p=0.008; 95%-CI:[6.38, 16.25]), walking capacity (p=0.002; 95%-CI:[38.06, 69.01]), cognitive performance (Verbal Learning and Memory Test, p=0.023; 95%-CI:[-3.84, 0.90]), HRQoL (p=0.003; 95%-CI:[-10.00, -4.901]). The analysis of the blood-derived biomarkers is still outstanding. There was no (serious) adverse event. Training adherence was at 93.69%.

HIIT is more effective for improving cardiorespiratory fitness, but not superior to MCT for secondary outcomes. HIIT is safe and feasible in pwPPMS. These results provide recommendations for designing endurance training programs for pwPPMS that can be easily translated into clinical practice.

35 Psychometric properties of 31 assessment tools for MS: what works, what doesn't, and what captures change

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Abstract

Background: Assessment of people with MS requires tools covering diverse aspects of functioning. Clinicians face a vast array of instruments with limited guidance on how they relate to each other and which capture meaningful change.

Objectives: To evaluate psychometric properties of 31 assessment tools used in MS rehabilitation, validate their linkage to the ICF Core Set for MS, and assess the utility of the ICF categorical profile.

Methods: Twenty-eight tools were administered to 128 people with MS at four time points around a two-month physiotherapy intervention (Dataset A): test-retest reliability, internal consistency, validity (concurrent, divergent, predictive for EDSS and falls), and responsiveness (SEM, MDC, MID) were assessed. Eight tools were evaluated in 29 people with MS (Dataset B) alongside ICF categorical profile assessment.

Results: Cluster analysis revealed two principal instrument groups split into further blocks: mobility measures (objective/capacity vs. subjective/performance), and quality-of-life measures (physical vs. psychological domain). Two tools previously rated as having insufficient evidence by the MS Task Force, the 2-Minute Walk Test and Five Times Sit-to-Stand Test, demonstrated good to excellent reliability and validity; the 5STS emerged as the best fall predictor. Patient-reported outcomes (MSIS-29, ABC, EQ-5D-5L) captured therapy-related improvements not detected by objective tests. Notably, MSIS-29 correlated with nearly all ICF Core Set categories, covering aspects that EDSS overlooked. The ICF categorical profile proved useful both for validating tools and for identifying commonly overlooked impairments.

Conclusions: Psychometric evaluation combined with ICF linking enables evidence-based, goal-oriented tool selection. Subjective instruments deserve equal standing alongside objective tests.

44 Linking Rehabilitation and Molecular Signatures: lncRNA Changes in MS Patients Undergoing VR-Supported Therapy

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Abstract

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic autoimmune disease of the central nervous system that often leads to progressive neurological deficits and a reduced quality of life for patients. An integral part of comprehensive treatment is physical therapy, the effectiveness of which can potentially be enhanced by the use of modern technologies such as virtual reality (VR), which supports patient adherence and enables personalized training.

Long non-coding RNAs (lncRNAs) represent a significant regulatory component of gene expression at the epigenetic, transcriptional, and post-transcriptional levels. Their dysregulation has been described in a number of pathological conditions, including MS, and changes in their expression are detectable in peripheral blood, making them promising non-invasive biomarkers.

In this study, we analyzed the expression of selected lncRNAs in the peripheral blood of patients with MS in relation to physical therapy intervention, including a variant utilizing VR. The study included 30 patients, some of whom underwent therapy supplemented with VR (n = 15). Candidate lncRNAs were selected based on current literature, and their expression was assessed using quantitative PCR.

Our findings indicate that physical therapy is associated with measurable changes in lncRNA expression profiles. These results support the role of lncRNAs as potential biomarkers of rehabilitation response. This work highlights the potential for combining molecular profiling with innovative rehabilitation strategies to advance personalized care in MS.

45 Physiotherapy-Induced Functional and Immunological Changes in People with Multiple Sclerosis: Benefits of VR Integration

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic neurological disorder causing motor, sensory, and visual impairments that reduce functional independence. Physiotherapy is essential in MS management, aiming to improve mobility, coordination, and quality of life. Integrating virtual reality (VR) into rehabilitation may enhance training intensity, patient engagement, and neuroplasticity. Beyond functional benefits, physiotherapy can also induce systemic biological changes. This study compared conventional physiotherapy (PT) with VR-enhanced physiotherapy (PTVR) in people with MS (PwMS), examining selected immune parameters as objective markers of physiological response.

Methods: Twenty-six PwMS were randomized to PT (n=13) or PTVR (n=13). Peripheral blood samples were collected before and after the rehabilitation program to assess major leukocyte subsets, including T cells, B cells, NK cells, and monocytes. Monocyte differentiation into monocyte-derived dendritic cells (MoDCs) was evaluated, and the potential effect of the HLA-DRB1*15 allele on therapy response was analyzed. Healthy controls (n=8) were included for baseline comparison.

Results: Both PT and PTVR increased T cell proportions, with greater changes in the PTVR group. Baseline Treg cells (CD4+CD127−CD25+) were lower in PwMS than controls ($p = 0.047$), but differences were no longer significant after therapy ($p = 0.156$). No outcomes were associated with HLA-DRB1*15 status.

Conclusion: Physiotherapy in PwMS elicits both functional and systemic responses. VR-enhanced therapy may amplify these effects, highlighting its potential for increasing overall physiological impact. Monitoring immune markers provides insight into patient responses and may guide optimization of physiotherapy strategies in neurological rehabilitation.

46 Smart NHPT for Motor and Cognitive Profiling in MS

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Abstract

Multiple sclerosis (MS) often impairs fine motor skills, highlighting the need for objective and sensitive assessment methods. This study introduces the Smart NHPT (www.smart-nhpt.com), an enhanced version of the Nine-Hole Peg Test that integrates automated peg detection and video-based hand motion capture. Besides total task duration, assembly and disassembly times, as well as peg-level timing are recorded. Video analysis quantifies hand's kinematic parameters, including spatial motion patterns, movement efficiency, speed, acceleration, jerk, pauses, variability, and inter-finger coordination. Study involved 162 MS patients; for each, average kinematic features across valid trials were computed, and highly collinear variables were removed. Experimental analysis examined performance differences across subgroups defined by disability (EDSS) and cognitive status (CogEval). ANOVA and post hoc Tukey tests revealed significant differences in execution times, with assembly time showing greater sensitivity to subgroup differences than total or disassembly time. Hence, performing assembly phase alone could reduce patient burden without compromising test's sensitivity. Associations between kinematic parameters and clinical scores were evaluated using ordinal logistic (EDSS) and linear regression (CogEval), adjusted for age and sex, alongside Spearman correlations. Higher disability levels were strongly associated with longer execution times and altered thumb movement patterns, particularly increased linearity and reduced jerk, indicating slower and more rigid motion. Cognitive performance was primarily linked to execution speed, with better outcomes observed in faster, smoother, and less interrupted movements. Overall, the Smart NHPT provides a non-invasive, cost-effective, and scalable tool for detailed motor assessment, offering valuable insights into both motor and cognitive aspects of MS-related status.

49 Impact of Information Processing Speed on Episodic Memory in Multiple Sclerosis: Insights from Survival Analysis

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Abstract

In Multiple Sclerosis (MS), poor performance on episodic memory tests is often difficult to interpret, as standard time-limited measures may confound memory deficits with slowed information processing speed (IPS).

To provide a clinically meaningful characterization of episodic memory by examining learning efficiency over time and its relationship with IPS in persons with MS (pwMS).

A total of 157 pwMS and 109 healthy controls completed the Selective Reminding Test (SRT). Survival analysis was used to estimate the number of trials required to achieve two consecutive full recalls (SRT-goal), allowing the assessment of learning progression rather than time-constrained performance.

PwMS required significantly more trials than controls to reach the SRT-goal (10.23 vs. 8.52 trials; $p < .001$). IPS played a critical role: pwMS with preserved IPS demonstrated more efficient learning (median = 9.71 trials), whereas those with impaired IPS showed slower acquisition (mean = 10.67 trials; $p < .001$). Clinically, only 12.5% of IPS-impaired pwMS reached the learning criterion, compared with 60% of those with preserved IPS. Marked differences were also observed across disease subtypes, with substantially lower success rates in progressive forms (SPMS: 15.8%; PPMS: 15%) compared to relapsing-remitting MS (60%).

These findings highlight that slowed learning, rather than pure memory failure, contributes substantially to episodic memory difficulties in MS. Survival analysis provides a clinically relevant tool to disentangle these mechanisms and may guide individualized cognitive rehabilitation, particularly by targeting processing speed to improve learning outcomes.

50 Depression screening in multiple sclerosis rehabilitation: comparing BDI-II and BDI-FS for clinically relevant assessment

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Abstract

Depressive symptoms are common in people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) and may affect engagement, adjustment, and outcomes in rehabilitation. However, their assessment is challenging because several somatic symptoms of depression overlap with MS-related symptoms such as fatigue, sleep disturbance, and cognitive complaints. This study compared depression rates identified by the BDI-II and the BDI-FS in pwMS, and discussed the clinical relevance of tool selection in MS rehabilitation settings.Three hundred and thirty-one pwMS (70.8% women; mean age = 48.1 years; median EDSS = 4) completed the BDI-II. BDI-FS scores were derived to distinguish depressive symptoms from symptoms potentially related to neurological disease. Depression prevalence was compared across both measures, together with score differences and agreement between classifications. Depression prevalence was significantly higher with the BDI-II than with the BDI-FS (54.1% vs 31.1%, $p < .001$). The odds ratio was 2.61 ($p < .001$). Rescaled scores differed significantly between measures (Wilcoxon $p < .001$), with a large effect size ($r_b = 0.927$). Agreement between the two classifications was only moderate-to-low (kappa = 0.41). These findings suggest that depression estimates in pwMS vary substantially depending on the screening tool used. In rehabilitation contexts, instruments including somatic items may overestimate depression and complicate clinical decision-making. Measures designed to reduce overlap with neurological symptoms, such as the BDI-FS, may provide a more clinically relevant basis for identifying patients who require psychological support within multidisciplinary MS rehabilitation.

51 Autonomic stress reactivity in multiple sclerosis: implications for emotional functioning and rehabilitation assessment

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Abstract

People with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) frequently experience anxiety, depression, fatigue, and reduced quality of life, yet the physiological processes underlying emotional dysregulation remain poorly understood. Because autonomic stress reactivity may inform both assessment and individualized rehabilitation, this meta-analytic review examined whether pwMS show altered autonomic responses to emotional or psychological stress (such as changes in heart rate, heart rate variability, or blood pressure), compared with healthy controls.

Fourteen studies were included, assessing heart rate, heart rate variability, blood pressure, electrodermal activity, and pupil response during emotional or stress-inducing tasks; quantitative analyses focused on cardiovascular indices. Between-group meta-analysis (k = 6) showed a large reduction in stress-induced autonomic responses in pwMS (d = -1.21), indicating a blunted physiological profile relative to controls. Qualitative findings from electrodermal and pupillary measures converged with this interpretation. Within-group analysis in pwMS suggested that autonomic responses were not absent but attenuated and variable (d = 0.71, p = .079). Despite substantial heterogeneity across studies, the overall pattern supports blunted autonomic flexibility in MS during psychologically salient situations.

These findings are clinically relevant for rehabilitation because autonomic measures may complement self-report and clinical observation by providing objective indices of emotional and stress regulation. Ultimately, standardized autonomic assessment could help identify different stress-reactivity profiles, improve patient characterization, and support more individualized psychological or rehabilitation interventions in MS.

72 Tracking physical activity in multiple sclerosis: Accelerometer vs. self-report measures across the disability spectrum

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Abstract

Background: Physical activity (PA) provides health and rehabilitative benefits in multiple sclerosis (MS); however, accurate assessment across the disability spectrum remains challenging.

Methods: This study employed self-reported measures (the International Physical Activity Questionnaire–Short Form, IPAQ-S, and the Physical Activity Scale for Individuals with Physical Disabilities, PASIPD) alongside the McRoberts® MoveMonitor accelerometer to assess PA levels and intensity in 29 people with MS (PwMS) across varying disability levels, based on Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) scores (2.0–8.5). A one-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in mobility and sedentary behaviour among three disability groups (mild, moderate, severe) and to compare self-reported versus objective measurements.

Results: Both methods distinguished PA levels across disability groups (Cohen's kappa = 0.740). Significant between-group differences were observed in PA levels (PAL, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.561$) and energy expenditure (total METs per day (TMD) $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.434$), particularly for moderate-to-vigorous activities. Average daily sitting time differed significantly (ATS, $p = 0.011$, $\eta^2 = 0.295$), whereas daytime lying did not (ATL, $p = 0.755$, $\eta^2 = 0.021$), suggesting the use of recovery strategies in more active PwMS. Participants with moderate-to-severe disability tended to overestimate moderate-to-vigorous activity in self-reports compared with accelerometer data.

Conclusion: Objective and self-reported measures reliably detect differences in PAL across disability spectrum. However, self-reports overestimate higher-intensity activity in more disabled individuals, indicating that questionnaire-based assessments should be used cautiously to avoid overestimating activity levels.

80 Aerobic fitness and fatigue-related measures differentially relate to motor cortex excitability and inhibition in mildly disabled people with multiple sclerosis: a TMS study

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Abstract

This study investigates mechanisms underlying perceived fatigue and fatigability in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), such as aerobic capacity and corticospinal function. As PwMS often show reduced cardiorespiratory fitness (VO2max), we examineted exhaustion exercise-induced changes in motor cortex excitatory and inhibitory processes, and the differential contribution of reported fatigue-related measures.

Twenty PwMS (age=42.95±8.21 years; EDSS=2.0±0.94) and twenty healthy controls (HC) performed the 6-minute walking test (6MWT), fatigue (Visual Analog Scale-VAS), fatigability (Pittsburgh Fatigability Scale-PFS), and fatigue impact (Modified Fatigue Impact Scale-MFIS) assessments. Cortical excitability and inhibition were evaluated pre-to-post maximal cardiopulmonary exercise test (CPET) using transcranial magnetic stimulation to build the Motor Evoked Potential recruitment curve (Slope_MEP) and contralateral Silent Period (cSP) at 105–155% of the active motor threshold (AMT) during a 10% maximal voluntary contraction of the first dorsal interosseus.

PwMS showed lower 6MWT and VO_2max, and higher VAS, PFS_physical, and MFIS than HC ($p<0.05$). In PwMS, 6MWT negatively correlated with MFIS_total, MFIS_physical, PFS_physical and PFS_mental, but not with VAS. Slope_MEP also negatively correlated with MFIS_physical and PFS_physical.

Following CPET, HC showed decreased Slope_MEP and AMT, while PwMS showed no changes.

In PwMS, hierarchical regressions showed that VO_2max predicted Slope_MEP ($R^2=0.30$), with no added effect of fatigue-related measures. VO_2max did not predict cSP duration, but adding MFIS_physical explained an additional 25.1% of variance.

Corticospinal excitability may represent a neurophysiological biomarker of physical fatigability in mildly disabled PwMS. Aerobic fitness influences motor excitability, while cortical inhibition relates closely to daily fatigue impact.

100 Chair Rise Muscle Power in Multiple Sclerosis: Implications of Disability Status and Sex

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Abstract

Muscle power (i.e. rate of work performed) has emerged as a key clinical factor in both healthy older adults and people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS). The 5-times sit-to-stand muscle power test (5STS_power) is a simple and widely used chair-rise test. In this exploratory cross-sectional study, we aimed to (1) compare 5STS_power between pwMS and healthy controls (HC) and (2) examine the effects of disability status and sex on 5STS_power.

Body weight-normalized 5STS_power was estimated using the time to complete the test together with body height, and chair height. Between-group differences were analyzed using linear mixed-effects models. Disability status subgroups were based on either EDSS or PDDS.

A total of 611 pwMS (67% females) and 147 HC (54% females) were analyzed. Compared to HC (5.55±1.41 W/kg), 5STS_power was lower in pwMS (-1.75 [-1.99;-1.52] W/kg, -32%), with a stepwise decline across disability stages (no-disability -13%, mild -26%, moderate -33%, severe -46%). Comparable differences were observed in both females (-1.71 [-2.02; -1.40] W/kg; -32%) and males (-1.73 [-2.11; -1.34] W/kg; -30%), also demonstrating a stepwise decline across disability stages (data not shown). In pwMS, males had slightly higher 5STS_power compared to females (0.28 [0.06;0.50] W/kg, +8%), with the difference highest in no disability (0.80 [0.06; 1.54] W/kg, +18%).

5STS_power was reduced in pwMS vs. HC. Differences were evident even in the no-disability subgroup, supporting its role as a biomarker for functional capacity and suggesting the need for early rehabilitation.

104 Cortical activity mechanisms underlying walking fatigability in people with multiple sclerosis: an fNIRS study

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Abstract

Introduction: Walking fatigability significantly affects people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) and may be caused by reduced neural capacity. Objective: To investigate the neural correlates of walking fatigability in pwMS during a 6-minute walking test (6MWT). Methods: Forty-two pwMS (EDSS 4.5[3.5], 51±11 years) and 25 healthy controls (HC, 52±7 years) performed a 6MWT wearing inertial measurement units, and a functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) for gait and cortical activity measurement, respectively. Fatigability indices for gait speed (GS), foot-strike angle (FS) and step duration variability (SDV) were calculated. fNIRS covered frontopolar (FPC), premotor (PMC), supplementary motor (SMA), and primary motor (M1) cortices. The relative (delta between minutes 6 and 1) oxy (ΔHbO) and deoxyhemoglobin (ΔHHb) (for cortical activity changes) were correlated with fatigability indices using Spearman/Pearson. Results: In pwMS, GS index correlated weakly positively with ΔHbO in the DLPFC and SMA ($rho<0.329$, $p<0.049$). Conversely, HC exhibited moderate positive correlations between the GS index and the ΔHbO in the FPC ($r=0.429$, $p=0.036$) and negative correlations with ΔHHb across DLPFC, PMC, SMA, and M1 ($rho<-0.437$, $p<0.036$). HC showed moderate negative correlations between the FS index and ΔHHb in the DLPFC, SMA and PMC ($rho<-0.496$, $p<0.016$). Increased cortical activity in the FPC (ΔHbO) was followed by increased SDV ($r>0.351$, $p<0.046$) in both groups. Conclusion: Reduced walking fatigability associates with increased cortical recruitment. While HC recruited a broader motor/cognitive network, pwMS rely on a more cognitive-driven network. However, increasing cortical activity to offset fatigability may increase gait variability, suggesting a functional trade-off.

106 A Novel Clinical Test to Detect Subtle Mobility Deficits in Mild MS: Measurement Properties of the Walking Adaptability Ladder Test

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Abstract

Background: Walking adaptability is essential for community ambulation, yet few clinical tests assess it and often show ceiling-effect in high-functioning populations. The Walking Adaptability Ladder Test (WALT) is dynamic task requiring continuous foot-placement adaptation and may detect subtle deficits in persons with MS (pwMS) with low disability. This study evaluated its reliability and validity in pwMS.

Methods: Fifty-one pwMS (EDSS:1.3±1.1) and 21 age-matched healthy controls (HC) were included. Participants performed single- and double-runs of the WALT during two sessions 7 days apart, with performance video-recorded. Inter-rater and test–retest reliability were assessed using ICCs. Construct validity was examined by comparing WALT scores between pwMS and HC, and correlating them with Mini-BESTest, Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT), Six-Spot Step Test (SSST), 6-Minute Walk (6MWT), Heel-Rise Test (HRT), Activities-Specific Balance Confidence (ABC), and MS-Walking Scale (MSWS-12).

Results: The WALT showed excellent test-retest (ICC: 0.93-0.95 [95%CI: 0.89–0.97]) and inter-rater (ICC: 0.84-0.96) reliability. WALT scores were significantly higher in pwMS compared to HC (single-run 15.3 vs 11.8; double-run 28.1 vs 22.1). WALT was significantly associated with cognition (single-run ρ=−0.44 & double-run ρ= −0.39), patient-reported outcomes (MSWS-12: 0.44 & 0.31; ABC: −0.49 & −0.39), balance and mobility (SSST: 0.61 & 0.58; MiniBEST: −0.59 & −0.47; 6MWT: −0.69 & −0.55), and lower-limb strength (HRT: −0.61 & −0.55).

Conclusion: The WALT demonstrates strong reliability and validity and is sensitive to subtle walking impairments in pwMS with low disability. It shows stronger associations with clinical outcomes, particularly balance and walking capacity, supporting its potential for early detection of functional deficits.

111 Patient-Reported Measures in Multiple Sclerosis: A Network Analysis for Stratification and Outcomes Assessment

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Abstract

Patient-reported and clinically assessed outcomes provide essential insight into the lived experience of people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS). Examining how these measures interact across domains may help clarify whether they capture overlapping or distinct aspects of the disease experience, improving their use in treatment evaluation and personalized rehabilitation.

We explored the relationships between physical, cognitive, and emotional domains using a network-based approach applied to a cohort of 1,176 pwMS. The amount of shared information between variables was quantified by predicting each item from all the others (LASSO regression), allowing the identification of the most relevant cross-domain associations.

The final cohort was composed of 961 pwMS (age = 54.0 ± 2.5; F: 628; disease duration = 14.4 ± 10.2 years). Four connected components (CCs) emerged, corresponding to cognition, physical function, bladder function, and mood. Notably, factors derived from the Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS), which assesses the perceived impact of fatigue, were entirely embedded within the mood-related CC, highlighting a close link between fatigue and mood. Moreover, MFIS showed a participation coefficient of zero, indicating minimal contribution to information exchange across different CCs. In contrast, higher participation coefficients were observed for cognitive and functional level factors, derived from the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (0.44–0.46) and the Functional Independence Measure (up to 0.499), respectively, reflecting greater contribution to inter-domain information exchange.

This suggests that the burden of fatigue impact may be more closely related to emotional factors than to physical or cognitive disability, while cognition and independence play a central integrative role across domains.

128 Establishing reliable change indices for cognitive and motor screening in Multiple Sclerosis: Implications for clinical practice

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Abstract

Introduction:

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a heterogeneous disease with highly variable symptoms. While modern treatments have reduced relapse frequency, persistent disease activity, highlighted by progression independent of relapse activity, demands robust monitoring and evidence-based evaluation of cognitive and motor function. This study aims to establish reliable change indices for key MS screening measures to improve detection of clinically meaningful change.

Methods: We conducted a 4-year longitudinal study in a healthy population (N=102; mean age 37.1±10.5 years; mean education 17.1±3.0 years; 64.7% female), demographically matched to Prague GUH MS center. Participants completed annual assessments using the Brief International Cognitive Assessment for MS (BICAMS), Paced Auditory Serial Addition Test (PASAT), 25-Foot-Walk Test (25FWT), 2-Minute-Walking Test (2MWT), and 9-Hole-Peg Test (9HPT) at baseline, 12, 36, and 48 months to define normative performance trajectories for these tools.

Results:

Group-level analysis revealed a learning effect in cognitive measures, with Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT) scores increasing from baseline (M=62.6±9.1) to month 48 (M=66.9±9.4). Motor measures, including the 2MWT, showed relative stability (baseline M=223.7±29.4, month 48 M=229.1±32.4). However, individual performance varied widely, with annual SDMT changes ranging from +22 to -19 points and 2MWT changes from +93 to -77 meters.

Conclusions:

These findings highlight the necessity of reliable longitudinal normative data to differentiate true change from natural variability in MS screening. Using our dataset, we will calculate reliable change indices (RCIs) and develop regression-based models to enhance the evaluation of cognitive and motor trajectories in MS, supporting more accurate assessments.

130 Are versions of 12-Item Multiple Sclerosis Walking Scale structurally valid? a COSMIN Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background: the 12-Item Multiple Sclerosis Walking Scale (MSWS-12) was developed in English measuring walking difficulty. It is widely used and has been translated into multiple languages. According to recommendations from COnsensus-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement INstruments (COSMIN), each translated version should be psychometrically evaluated as a separate scale.

Objective: to assess structural validity of MSWS-12 versions

Methods: a systematic review following COSMIN guidelines. Studies assessing MSWS-12 structural validity through classical test theory, and/or item response theory were included. Structural validity was rated as sufficient (+), insufficient (-), or indeterminate (?).

Results: A total of 9 studies for English, Dutch, Italian, Croatian, and Persian versions were included. English, Dutch and Croatian versions showed sufficient structural validity, while Italian and Persian versions were insufficient. The English version showed strong unidimensionality (comparative fit index (CFI)=0.99, standardized root mean residual (SRMR)=0.04, factor loadings 0.62-0.93, and explained variance 66% to 80%) with no cross-loadings. The Dutch version showed excellent fit (CFI=1, SRMR =0.02). The Croatian version showed high factor loading (0.81- 0.95), explained variance 81.2%, and no cross-loadings. Insufficiency in the Italian version was due to violation of local independence (residual correlation <0.2), and for the Persian version due to excessive cross-loadings (>10%). All studies were at very good or adequate quality except the Persian study was rated inadequate because the low sample size.

Conclusion: Structural validity analysis is important for ensuring unidimensionality and validity of scoring criteria. Further high-quality studies are required for other versions.

132 Rehabilitation-Related Changes in Resting-State Functional Connectivity in People with Multiple Sclerosis: A Controlled Pre-Post fMRI Study

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is associated with widespread alterations in functional brain networks contributing to motor and cognitive impairments. Understanding how rehabilitation influences functional network organization may clarify the neural mechanisms underlying functional recovery.

Objective: To investigate rehabilitation-related changes in resting-state functional connectivity and clinical outcomes.

Methods: Participants with MS (n=18; mean age 48.11±9.24; mean EDSS:3.63±0.68) were allocated to a treatment group receiving a rehabilitation programme or a control group. Resting-state fMRI data were obtained at baseline and after a 3-month intervention. Functional connectivity was analyzed using an ROI-to-ROI approach with the CONN toolbox (v22.a) and SPM. Preprocessing included motion correction, normalization to MNI space, spatial smoothing, and CompCor-based noise reduction. Connectivity values were calculated using Fisher-transformed correlation coefficients and analyzed using a general linear model with group × time interaction, with FDR correction for multiple comparisons (p-FDR<0.05). Walking capacity and mobility were assessed using the Six-Minute Walk Test and Timed Up and Go Test.

Results: Following the intervention, the treatment group demonstrated increased functional connectivity mainly within salience and fronto-insular networks. Increases were observed between the right inferior frontal gyrus and salience network regions, including the anterior cingulate cortex and anterior insula. Additional increases were detected between insular and inferior frontal regions and within cerebellar networks. No significant connectivity changes were observed in the control group. Walking capacity and mobility improved.

Conclusion: Rehabilitation may promote reorganization of functional brain networks in people with MS. Increased connectivity within salience and fronto-insular networks may reflect neuroplastic mechanisms underlying functional recovery.

Motor Recovery and Adaptive Compensation in Multiple Sclerosis and related disorders

Motor recovery refers to the restoration of original movement patterns through neuroplastic reorganization of the central nervous system, leading to improved quality, coordination, and efficiency of movement. In contrast, adaptive compensation involves the use of alternative strategies—such as recruiting different muscles or body segments—to achieve a functional goal without restoring the original motor pattern.

Rather than representing a strict dichotomy, recovery and compensation should be viewed as dynamic and interacting processes, whose relative contribution may vary depending on disease stage, residual capacity, and individual patient characteristics.

This chapter focusses on approaches and strategies to facilitate motor recovery while appropriately addressing and managing compensatory mechanisms.

10 Mechanisms underlying exercise-induced pain modulation in people with multiple sclerosis – a scoping review

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Abstract

Background and study aim: Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a prevalent chronic neuroinflammatory disease, characterized by demyelination, inflammation and axonal degeneration. Up to 40% of people with MS (pwMS) experience central neuropathic pain (CNP). Despite numerous debilitating consequences, CNP is often underdiagnosed and undertreated, with limited pharmacological options available. However, exercise is a promising non-pharmacological intervention in the management of pain. This scoping review therefore aims to (1) outline the pathophysiological mechanisms of CNP in MS, (2) summarize the neurophysiological effects of exercise on pain in MS, and (3) identify the mechanistic approaches through which exercise could modulate pain.

Methods: PubMed, EMBASE, Web of Science, and Sport Discus were searched using terms related to MS, exercise, and pain modulation. Quantitative studies investigating effects or mechanisms of exercise on recurrent, subacute, or chronic pain in pwMS were included if pain was assessed through self-reported or objective measures.

Results: Thirty-four articles were included. Methodological findings suggest that neuroinflammation, structural and functional central nervous system changes and alterations in neurotransmitters and hormones contribute to pain in pwMS. Exercise was found to modulate several of these mechanisms, including inflammatory

markers, neurostructural and functional brain changes, and pathways involving the endocannabinoid and tryptophan systems.

Conclusion: Exercise may exert beneficial effects on central mechanisms relevant to pain modulation in pwMS, including neuroinflammatory pathways, neuroplastic adaptations, and neurotransmitter regulation. However, existing evidence is limited, warranting further high-quality research to fully clarify mechanistic links and establish exercise as a targeted non-pharmacological treatment for CNP in pwMS.

11 Dynamic adaptation responses to auditory perturbations during walking in multiple sclerosis with progressive subtypes.

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Abstract

Introduction: Walking demands adaptation to dynamic environments, yet how persons with progressive multiple sclerosis (PwPMS) adapt movement timing during locomotion remains unclear. We thus investigated PwPMS's stepwise adaptation to controlled auditory perturbations, manipulating type, direction, and stimulus complexity, relative to healthy controls (HC).

Methods: Twenty-one PwPMS and eighteen HCs completed two randomised blocks (music, metronomes), each with four 3-min walking trials: two phase perturbations (±90°shifts) and two period perturbations (±10%tempo-change). Each trial began with 30second of steady 100 beats-per-minute, followed by seven unpredictable perturbations in 23-second windows. Data were segmented into perturbation windows and fitted with cubic-B splines to extract peak response, time to peak, and response duration. Group differences were determined using 95% confidence-interval using non-parametric boostrap method.

Results: PwPMS detected perturbations and initiated adaptations, but didn't converge to the target tempo, undershooting relative to HC. For positive perturbations, HC overshot targets across conditions, whereas PwPMS undershot in both tempo and phase perturbations. For *negative perturbations*, group differences were evident for music, where PwPMS exhibited greater response variability. PwPMS also demonstrated slower response dynamics in metronome conditions, while HCs reached the peak response faster. Total response duration was significantly longer in PwPMS, particularly for negative metronome and music perturbations, indicating delayed recovery following a perturbation.

Conclusion: PwPMS perceived and initiated adaptation to auditory timing changes but exhibited incomplete and slower corrections, especially under inhibitory and complex conditions. *These findings warrant the assessment of adaptive control during walking under temporally dynamic conditions; essential in daily living.*

20 Complexity of falls in people with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background
Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) have a markedly higher fall frequency than the general population, with recurrent falls reported by
over one third. Fall related risk factors span all ICF domains, yet less is known about how these factors interact in real life fall situations. A deeper understanding of this complexity is essential for effective fall prevention.

Aim
To explore and describe contributing factors and the multifaceted nature of fall situations among individuals with MS.

Method
In this longitudinal study, 33 adults with MS who had fallen at least once in the past year and did not use walking aids were followed prospectively. Participants reported falls as they occurred, and brief follow up interviews were conducted shortly thereafter. Descriptive statistics summarized fall frequency, timing, and location. A deductive content analysis, guided by the ICF framework, identified influencing and interacting factors.

Results
Twentyfive participants reported 94 fall events. Most falls occurred during daytime (61%) and outdoors (56%). The analyses revealed that falls rarely resulted from a single factor. Instead, they reflected complex interactions between physical impairments, activity demands, environmental challenges, and personal factors such as fatigue and fluctuating function.

Conclusions
This study demonstrates that fall situations in MS arise from multilayered interactions rather than isolated risk factors. Considering the contextual and dynamic nature of falls may enhance clinical conversations and improve the precision of fall risk assessments. Integrating individualized, self management–oriented strategies that address this complexity may contribute to reducing fall incidence.

28 Comparison of the blood lactate profile of low- and moderate fit people with multiple sclerosis to healthy controls

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Abstract

Background: People with MS (pwMS) have displayed higher blood lactate concentrations at rest and lower lactate values during submaximal and maximal exercise intensities compared to healthy controls (HC). Nonetheless, no study has thoroughly investigated the blood lactate profile of pwMS with various fitness levels. The aim of the present study was therefore to examine and compare the lactate profile in pwMS of various fitness levels and compare this to HC.

Methods: 23 pwMS (16 women) and eight HC (two women) participated in this cross-sectional study. Participants performed a maximal aerobic capacity test ($\dot{V}O_2$-max test) used to categorize pwMS into a "moderate-fitness" ($\dot{V}O_2$-max > 26ml/kg/min) and "low-fitness" ($\dot{V}O_2$-max ≤ 26 ml/kg/min) group. Individual lactate profiling tests were performed with at least one day of rest between tests. Maximal power output (W_{max}) derived from the $\dot{V}O_2$-max test were used to calculate a standardized workload for each participant.

Results: No differences in lactate levels between groups at rest (*p=0.93*) nor at any of the working intensities below 80% of W_{max} (*p=0.43*) were found. Maximal lactate levels were ~22% and ~29% higher in the "moderate-fitness" group (*p=0.01)* and HC (*p=0.03)*, when compared to the "low-fitness" group, respectively. No difference was observed between the "moderate-fitness" group and HC (*p=0.63*).

Conclusion: The blood lactate profile of pwMS did not differ from the lactate profile of HC regardless of training status. However, a lower maximal lactate level was found in low-fitness pwMS, indicating a reduced anaerobic potential compared to HC and moderately-fitness pwMS.

29 The effect of hippotherapy on postural control of the trunk in Multiple Sclerosis: a pilot study

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Abstract

Aim

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) may cause, among several other symptoms, balance disorders. In hippotherapy the movement of the horse provides motor and sensory feedback to the equestrian and may therefore be useful as a therapeutic strategy. The aim of this pilot study was to explore short-term effects of hippotherapy on trunk balance in people with MS (PwMS).

Methods

Inpatients with MS and EDSS 5-7 received hippotherapy individually (intervention group) or balance training in group (control group). Both therapies consisted of three training sessions of 20minutes, once a week for three consecutive weeks, additional to their standard rehabilitation program.

Trunk balance was assessed using Trunk Impairment Scale (TIS) at baseline (T0) and at three weeks (T1). Borg rating of perceived exertion (RPE) scale measured perception of the effort and fatigue pre- and post-session.

Results

Sixteen participants completed the study. At T1, TIS scores improved significantly for the hippotherapy group (n=11; p=0.018), but not for the balance group (n=5, p=0.066).

For the TIS subitems, no significant pre-post differences were observed in either group. At T1, the hippotherapy group showed trends toward improvement in static sitting balance (p=0.059) and coordination (p=0.093); the control group in static (p=0.066) and dynamic sitting balance (p=0.066).

No changes were observed in Borg scores.

Conclusion

Hippotherapy may be an effective therapy to improve trunk balance for people with MS, and sessions do not appear to induce fatigue. However, larger studies with longer follow-up are needed.

30 Impact of a Theoretical–Practical Program on Fatigue, Performance, and Quality of Life in People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Fatigue is one of the most frequent and disabling symptoms in multiple sclerosis (MS), with significant consequences for autonomy, social participation, and quality of life. Its multifactorial origin and the modest benefits of pharmacological treatments underscore the need for rehabilitation strategies. This quasi-experimental pilot study, approved by the relevant ethics committee (Ref.CEIM:123/2022), examined the effects of an intensive group program on perceived fatigue, functional performance, and quality of life in individuals with MS.

MATERIAL AND METHODS: Nine participants completed a four-session intervention combining health education on fatigue identification and healthy lifestyle habits with occupational analysis and training in energy conservation strategies. Pre- and post-intervention assessments included the Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS), Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS), Visual Analogue Scales (VAS) for a chosen activity and for daily activities, and EQ-5D. Effect sizes were calculated with Cohen's d, and paired Student's t-tests were used to determine statistical significance.

RESULTS: The MFIS total score improved significantly, with the physical subscale showing the largest effect. Moderate improvements were found in FSS scores, perceived ability to perform the chosen activity, and the impact of fatigue on basic tasks, though without statistical significance. Instrumental activities showed small changes, and quality-of-life scores exhibited a slight positive trend. Participants reported high satisfaction with the intervention.

CONCLUSIONS: The program produced clinically meaningful improvements in fatigue impact—particularly in its physical dimension—and enhanced perceived functional capacity. These findings support the value of structured, group-based rehabilitation within interdisciplinary MS care.

38 How motor and cognitive ability affect motor-cognitive performance in people with multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction: ability to perform motor-cognitive tasks is essential for everyday life.

Aim: to compare motor-cognitive performance in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) and healthy controls (HC), and to identify motor and cognitive factors associated with motor-cognitive performance.

Methods: participants completed a motor task (walking) and a cognitive task (auditory-Stroop), in single- and dual-task conditions. Spatial and temporal gait parameters were measured using inertial sensors, auditory-Stroop response time was measured using audio-recordings.

Within- and between-group differences were analysed using t-tests or Mann-Whitney U tests. Stepwise regression models examined association of motor (global balance: Mini-Balance Evaluation Systems Test; mobility: Timed Up & Go; step-time; step-time variability) and cognitive factors (task set shifting: Trail Making Test-IV; inhibition: Color-Word Interference Test-III; processing speed: Symbol Digit Modalities Test) with walking-speed and response-time during dual-task performance.

Results: 37 PwMS (women=65%; mean age=53.8 (SD=12.2)); median EDSS=3.5 (IQR=2.5-4.0)) and 39 HC (women=69%; mean age=54.0 (SD=11.6)) were included. During dual-tasking PwMS walked slower (mean difference=0.15m/s; 95%CI=-0.24 to -0.05; *p*=0.003) and had longer response-time (mean difference=0.20s; 95%CI=0.19 to 0.28; *p*=<0.001) than HC. In PwMS motor (global balance, mobility) and cognitive factors (processing speed, task set shifting, inhibition) significantly explained walking-speed (ΔR^2_{motor}=32%, $\Delta R^2_{cognitive}$=28%) and response time (ΔR^2_{motor}=39%, $\Delta R2_{cognitve}$=38%) while dual-tasking. In HC, only motor factors including step-time measures significantly explained walking-speed during dual-tasking (ΔR^2_{motor}=55%).

Conclusion: motor-cognitive performance was affected in PwMS compared to HC. Both motor and cognitive factors captured by clinical measures significantly explained motor-cognitive performance in PwMS. For deeper understanding, studies exploring brain activation during motor-cognitive activities are warranted.

40 Investigating the impact of motor fatigability on cognition and balance in people with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

The effects of fatigability are still unclear because of a lack of valid fatiguing task and a cognitive/motor assessment in multiple sclerosis (MS). The novelty of this study is to induce acute fatigability during a sustained walking test while concurrently assess cognition and balance in a large sample of people with MS (PwMS). In this multicentre cross-sectional study, 150 subjects were assessed before (PRE), immediately after (POST), and 30 minutes after (REST) a fatiguing walking test. Cognitive performance was assessed using the Brief International Cognitive Assessment for Multiple Sclerosis (BICAMS), while static balance was evaluated through sway amplitude and sample entropy measured with inertial measurement units. Assessments were conducted before (PRE), immediately after (POST), and 30 minutes after (REST) the fatiguing task. PwMS were classified according to the Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS) into a high-fatigue group (MS_HF;MFIS ≥ 38 points) and a low-fatigue group (MS_LF;MFIS < 38 points). A total of 120 PwMS were included, along with 30 HS. Cognitive scores showed a significant time × group interaction (p=0.001). Medio-lateral sway amplitude increased across time-points in MS_HF, showed smaller changes in MS_LF, and remained stable in HS (p<0.001). Medio-lateral sample entropy decreased across timepoints in MS_HF, indicating reduced postural control complexity, while MS_LF showed minor reductions and HS showed no changes (p<0.001). No significant changes were observed in the antero-posterior direction. Motor fatigability induces immediate impairments in cognition and medio-lateral postural control in PwMS, particularly in individuals with high trait fatigue. Fatigue-based stratification may inform more personalized rehabilitation strategies.

41 Brain activity and connectivity are increased in fatigued people with multiple sclerosis during a static balance task: a fNIRS study

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Abstract

Fatigue and balance disorders are highly prevalent in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), yet the neural mechanisms underlying their interplay during functional postural control remain poorly understood. In this cross-sectional study, we investigated the relationship between fatigue, balance, and cortical haemodynamics and connectivity measured with functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS).

We recruited 16 PwMS (EDSS<3.5) and 19 healthy controls (HC). Based on the Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS), PwMS were classified as fatigued (f_PwMS, MFIS≥38;n=10) or non-fatigued (nf_PwMS, MFIS<38;n=6). Participants performed static balance on foam with eyes closed while fNIRS was recorded over frontal, temporal, and occipital cortices. Outcomes including MFIS, postural sway, haemodynamic response (HR; oxy-haemoglobin changes) were estimated using linear mixed-effects models, and inter-channel functional connectivity computed via coherence analysis.

In PwMS, MFIS showed a trend toward association with sway (r=0.49,p=0.06). Sway was higher in f_PwMS than nf_PwMS and HC, but group differences were not significant (p=0.341). Compared with HC, PwMS showed increased bilateral prefrontal HR (BA10) and reduced occipital HR (BA18). Stratified analyses indicated greater HR in f_PwMS versus HC and nf_PwMS in bilateral BA10 and temporo-parietal regions (BA21–22;right BA39–40), with a right-hemisphere predominance; occipital differences (BA18,19) also emerged between MS subgroups. Global coherence did not significantly differ across groups; however, an exploratory BA10 analysis showed higher prefrontal coherence in f_PwMS than nf_PwMS (p=0.02).

During a sensory-challenging stance, f_PwMS exhibit amplified right prefrontal and temporo-parietal activation and focal prefrontal hyper-connectivity, consistent with compensatory top-down control to maintain balance aimed at guiding biomarker-driven rehabilitation trials.

47 An Outpatient Rehabilitation Programme for People with Multiple Sclerosis: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Background: People with multiple sclerosis (MS) have significant challenges in accessing specialised outpatient rehabilitation. There is still a need for evidence based background to establish non-pharmacological treatment as an important component of MS care. This pilot study evaluated a multidisciplinary outpatient programme developed to address motor recovery, psychosocial wellbeing, and nutritional self-management in people with MS.

Methods: Twenty-five participants (mean age 50 years, 80% female, mean Expanded Disability Status Scale score 4.3) were enrolled in a four-month programme including individual physiotherapy, group physiotherapy, supportive group psychotherapy, and nutritional recommendation. Twenty participants completed the full programme and pre/post assessments. Six validated outcome measures were used to assess gait, fine motor skills, cognitive functions, balance confidence, and the impact of MS on daily life and fatigue. Paired t-tests with multiple comparison correction were applied.

Results: Statistically significant improvements were found in 8 of 10 outcomes after the two-month intensive phase. The greatest effects were observed in gait coordination ($p<0.001$), impact of MS on daily life ($p<0.001$), balance confidence ($p=0.018$), and fine motor function of the dominant hand ($p=0.006$). No significant change was detected in fatigue or walking speed.

Conclusion: A structured, intensive multidisciplinary programme can bring clinical improvements in motor, cognitive, and quality-of-life aspects in people with MS. These findings can support implementation of this model as an essential component of standard MS care.

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53 MS-ACT: a concept for severely affected patient with multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Background:

Many severely affected people with multiple sclerosis (SA-PwMS) cannot perform basic tasks relevant for leading a self-determined daily life. The therapy options for the SA-PwMS are limited. In advanced stages, they receive a homebased therapy that focuses on passive interventions but underestimates their potential to maintain or regain some independence to various extents.

Objective:

In our rehabilitation center, a new multidisciplinary approach was developed, based on the Bobath-Concept and ICF-model. The aim of MS-ACT is to complement physiotherapy and occupational therapy as a functional, resource-oriented intervention focused on empowering individuals to lead a self-directed daily life.

Concept Description:

In addition to their weekly sessions of physiotherapy and occupational therapy, the patients received 1-2 sessions of MS-ACT and activating nursing care. Patients´ own home setting (size of home, presence of stairs, lifts, floor conditions, thresholds, type of bed, disability aids in the bathroom) were contributing factors to the development of the therapy plan. Family support, physical state (spasticity, pain, muscle weakness, Uhthoff´s phenomenon) and cognitive state are also considered.

Conclusion

The concept is well received and contributes to interdisciplinary collaboration. goal attainment scaling, functional independence measure, berg balance scale and Barthel-Inex are being collected to evaluate the concept, but that the data are still being analyzed. In summary, combining ICF-framework and Bobath-Concept offers a holistic, goal-oriented approach for SA-PwMS. By addressing individual goals, home settings, and motor learning principles, it helps sustain functional ability and supports physical independence despite disease progression.

55 The Approach of the Bobath Concept in the recovery of the upper limb in patients with multiple sclerosis: A case report (using the MBCP model)

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Abstract

Background: People with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) require therapy specifically tailored to their individual disease profile. Rehabilitation aims to maintain function, independence, and quality of life for as long as possible. The Bobath Concept offers a frame for recovery that is individualized, inclusive and tailored to the progression of the disease

Objective: The aim of this case presentation is to show that an intensive 5 day treatment of a patient with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) can yield a consistent improvement of the upper limb activity, help to reorganize the CNS and improve activities and quality of life.

Methods:. The patient underwent therapy in our rehabilitation clinic as usual but additionally received 30 minutes of Bobath therapy each day for one week.

Results: The assessments carried out at the beginning of the therapy (T0) and at the end of the four sessions (T4) show an objective improvement in activity of the upper limb, of pain and also of quality of life (ARAT: 17 vs 24; GAS: -1 vs +1; PNS: 6 vs 2; QoLS: 59 vs 71; Tinetti: 5 vs 9; BBS; 6 vs 12)

Conclusion: An intensive 5-therapy session within the frame of the Bobath concept improved the activity of the upper extremity in a patient with MS. The improvement was seen at the level of hand activity (grasping and releasing), elbow extension and arm flexion.
The improvement of the upper limb activity was due to better understanding of the multisensory integration that influence the M1 output.

60 Pain severity is associated with physical activity, exercise participation, and health-related quality of life in people with multiple sclerosis.

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Abstract

Background: Pain is common in people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS), significantly impacting quality of life, and may be associated with exercise and physical activity, though this remains largely unexplored.

Purpose: To estimate the prevalence and severity of pain in pwMS, and its association with physical activity, exercise participation, and health-related quality of life.

Method: Our survey involved 936 pwMS. Outcomes included average pain severity (NRS^{0-10}), Baecke Physical Activity Questionnaire: physical activity ($BPAQ_{physact}$), exercise participation ($BPAQ_{exercise}$), and health-related quality of life ($HR\text{-}QoL_{VAS}$). Participants were stratified into three groups: no pain (NRS=0), mild pain (NRS=1-2), and moderate-severe pain (NRS≥3). Descriptive data are presented as mean±SD or median (IQR). Linear mixed-effects models were used for statistical analysis.

Results: Descriptive characteristics: 73% females, age 58±12 years, disease duration 17±11 years, patient-determined disease steps 2.8±2.2, pain prevalence 76% (no pain: 24%, mild pain: 24%, moderate-severe pain 52%), with a median pain severity of 3 (1;5). When comparing the no pain group to the other pain groups, differences were observed in $BPAQ_{physact}$ (no pain 8.64±2.48 points; mild pain -0.64 [-1.18;-0.11] (p=0.018), moderate-severe pain -0.66 [-1.12;-0.20] (p=0.005)); in $BPAQ_{exercise}$ (no pain 3.16±1.76 points; mild pain -0.47 [-0.94;-0.09] (p=0.015), moderate-severe pain -0.49 [-0.82;-0.17] (p=0.003); and in $HR\text{-}QoL_{VAS}$ (no pain 74.3±18.9, mild pain -5.6 [-9.3;-1.9] (p=0.003), moderate-severe pain -19.7 [-22.9;-16.5] (p<0.001)).

Conclusion: A high pain prevalence was observed in a large, representative cohort of pwMS, along with negative associations between pain and physical activity, exercise participation, and health-related quality of life.

64 Clinical Approach to Balance Intensity in People with Multiple Sclerosis: Clinical Judgment versus the Balance Intensity Tool for Exercise

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Abstract

Objective: Balance training is essential for enhancing stability and reducing fall risk in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS). However, guidance on exercise intensity remains vague and largely relies on clinical intuition, as standardized assessment methods are absent. This study introduces and validates the Balance Intensity Tool for Exercise (BITE), a standardized method for determining balance exercise intensity based on observable performance errors and compares it with traditional clinical judgment.

Methods: Sixty-one PwMS completed line-walking and tandem-stance tasks that were recorded on video for subsequent analysis. Intensity was rated using two approaches: (1) BITE, where three assessors independently measured the percentage of time with observable errors, and (2) clinical judgment, where three experienced physiotherapists scored intensity on a 0–100 scale. Balance capacity was measured with the Mini-BESTest. Inter-rater reliability was evaluated using Bland–Altman analysis, and associations with balance capacity were examined using Spearman's rank correlation.

Results: BITE produced consistently lower intensity estimates than clinical judgment (line walk median: 36% vs. 74%; tandem stance median: 23% vs. 53%). Both methods correlated strongly with balance performance measured with the Mini-BESTest (Spearman's rho: -0.82). BITE demonstrated superior inter-rater reliability, with narrower limits of agreement (±14–20%) compared to clinical judgment (±25–36%). Agreement between methods was low in the mid-range, indicating systematic differences in classification.

Conclusion: BITE provides a quantifiable and reliable method to describe balance exercise intensity in PwMS based on time of imbalance and performance error. Further research should explore its feasibility and applicability in other populations with impaired balance.

74 The cost of imbalance: How balance problems drive energy cost of walking in persons with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction: People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) have difficulties walking and show high energy cost of walking (ECw). Balance problems may contribute to the higher ECw.

Aim: To investigate the relationship between dynamic balance and ECw in PwMS, and whether walking speed affects this relation.

Methods: Twenty PwMS (mean age 49.1 (10.8); 62% females) walked on an instrumented treadmill for 6 minutes at comfortable walking speed (CWS), followed by 6 minutes at fast walking speed (FWS). ECw was derived from oxygen consumption measures. Dynamic balance, measured as medio-lateral margin of stability (ML MoS) was calculated for the most (MIL) and least impaired leg (LIL). In addition, balance board tests were performed as a secondary measure for dynamic balance. The relationship between dynamic balance and ECw was assessed using linear mixed models, with walking speed as effect modifier.

Results: The mean ECw at CWS was 4.99 J/kg/m and 4.84 J/kg/m at FWS. ML MoS was positively and significantly associated with ECw (β = 11.82, 95%CI: 2.62; 21.03). Walking speed was a significant effect modifier; at lower walking speeds, a higher ML MoS was associated with a larger increase in ECw, while this effect diminished at higher walking speeds.

Discussion: In PwMS, poorer dynamic balance was associated with higher ECw predominantly at lower walking speeds, with this association attenuating at higher speeds. This suggests that improving walking speed and dynamic balance jointly may reduce the energetic burden of walking in this population.

77 Feasibility of high intensity task oriented circuit training in people with severe multiple sclerosis-related disability

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Abstract

Mobility impairments are common in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), limiting autonomy and participation. Motor rehabilitation is effective in reducing the impact of the disease, although benefits tend to decrease with increasing disability. This study aimed to evaluate the feasibility of high-intensity task-oriented circuit training (TOCT) in PwMS and severe motor impairment, followed by a three-month asynchronous telerehabilitation program.

PwMS and EDSS≥6.5 were recruited. Participants underwent 12 TOCT sessions (3 hours each) over four weeks. In groups of three, they completed three training rounds targeting wheelchair propulsion, bed mobility and transfers, sit-to-stand, standing balance, anticipatory postural control, and walking. Each station lasted six minutes, followed by three minutes rest. After inpatient treatment, participants followed a home-based program with monthly remote supervision. The primary outcome was feasibility. Secondary outcomes were mobility, balance, cardiovascular endurance, fatigue, and quality of life assessed post-treatment (T1), after home intervention (T2), and at three-month follow-up (T3).

Twelve participants completed the program (9 males; age 51.87; EDSS 7). The intervention was acceptable (5/5), safe (5/5), and appropriate (4/5), with no adverse events. Significant improvements were observed in balance (Berg Balance Scale: T1 +5.42, T2 +4.27, T3 +3.18), cardiovascular endurance (Six Minute Push Test: T1 +46.98, T2 +46.34, T3 +43.49), perceived balance (Activity Balance Confidence: T1 +7.03, T2 +9.93), and fatigue (Modified Fatigue Impact Scale: T2 -8.93).

TOCT is feasible in PwMS and severe mobility impairment, and may improve balance, cardiovascular capacity, and fatigue. Confirmatory studies with larger samples are needed.

83 Effects of a new complex intervention compared to usual care on physical functions and work barriers in employed people with multiple sclerosis: a randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

Background: People with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) are often unemployed or in reduced positions few years after diagnosis due to factors such as fatigue, balance- and cognitive problems. Few interventions address these complex challenges systematically.

Aim: To examine effects of a new intervention, CoreDISTparticipation, compared to usual care, on work barriers, balance and fatigue in employed pwMS.

Methods: An assessor-blinded prospective randomized controlled trial including 115 pwMS(Expanded disability status scale 0-4) randomly allocated to CoreDISTparticipation (n=57) or usual care (n=58). CoreDISTparticipation:1) Information videos; hospital outpatient physiotherapist assessment; meeting with employment consultant. 2) Municipality;group-training 60 min2x /week for 6-weeks(indoor CoreDIST-balance+outdoor CoreDIST-balance and high-intensity running/walking 3)6-weeks digitally supported home-training.

Assessments: baseline, weeks(W) 9 and 16. Primary outcome: Multiple Sclerosis Work Difficulties Questionnaire-23(MSWDQ-23). Secondary: Trunk Impairment Scale-modified Norwegian Version(TIS-modNV), Mini-Balance Evaluation Systems Test(Mini-BESTest), Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale-29(MSIS-29) and Fatigue Severity Scale. Statistics: descriptive and repeated-measures mixed-models.

Results: 86 women and 29 men participated, mean age 46.9 years(SD9.3), 60.5% worked full-time. The results demonstrated significant between-group differences on *work barriers*; MSWDQ-23 6.6 points (CI 3.54-9.65, p= 0.00)(W9); *balance*; Mini-BESTest 0.62 points (CI 0.06- 2.17, *p*= 0.03)(W16), *trunk control;* TIS-modNV 0.46 points (CI 0.89-0.03, *p=0.036*)(W9) and 0.79 points, (CI 0.17-2.49, p=0.013)(W16) and *impact of MS;* MSIS-29 5.87 points, (CI 3.16-8.57) (p= 0.00) (W9).

Conclusion: The results indicate that a comprehensive approach addressing work, balance and physical activity is effective on physical functions and work barriers for pwMS.

84 Patient-reported polysymptomatology in persons with multiple sclerosis at the Danish MS Hospitals.

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Abstract

Background: Numerous symptoms are well-documented in persons with multiple sclerosis (pwMS). However, limited research has addressed *polysymptomatology* - the intricate interplay of multiple and concurrent symptoms. Understanding hereof could potentially have great implications for clinical referral pathways and help optimise rehabilitation strategies. We aimed to investigate this in a large cohort of pwMS referred to MS-specialized rehabilitation at the Danish MS Hospitals.

Methods: A total of n=3,833 pwMS (68% females, 54±13 yrs, Patient Determined Disease Steps 3.1±2.1, disease duration 13±11 yrs, 54/30/16% relapsing-remitting/progressive/unknown) were enrolled. Six common and debilitating patient-reported symptoms registered prior to hospitalization were selected for analysis; mobility, pain, bladder, fatigue, cognition, and depression. Each symptom was scored across three prevalence and severity categories; not affected, affected, or highly affected. Polysymptoms were defined as two or more symptoms rated 'affected or highly affected', whereas severe polysymptoms were defined as two or more symptoms rated 'highly affected'.

Results: High prevalences were reported across all symptoms; mobility (43% affected/35% highly affected), pain (50%/25%), bladder (36%/10%), fatigue (47%/49%), cognition (60%/18%), and depression (50%/10%). A total of 94.7% reported polysymptoms, with 6.5% reporting two symptoms, 15.6%, 25.5%, 31.8%, and 18.3% reporting 3, 4, 5, and 6 symptoms. For severe polysymptoms, a total of 42.1% reported this, with 22.6% reporting two symptoms, 12.3%, 5.7%, 1.4%, and 0.1% reporting, 3, 4, 5, and 6 symptoms.

Conclusion: In addition to high prevalence rates across the six symptoms, a large proportion had polysymptoms (94.7%) and a substantial proportion had severe polysymptoms (42.1%).

86 Repetitive Acute Intermittent Hypoxia Improves Ankle Strength and Walking Endurance in People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background: Motor impairment is a major consequence of multiple sclerosis (MS), yet therapies that restore motor function remain limited. Acute intermittent hypoxia (AIH) is a noninvasive intervention consisting of brief episodes of mild hypoxia interspersed with normoxia. It triggers serotonin and BDNF-dependent signaling cascades that enhance motoneuron excitability and corticospinal drive. AIH has been shown to improve strength and walking after spinal cord injury and stroke, but data in pwMS remain scarce.

Objective: To determine efficacy of five-day repetitive AIH for improving ankle strength and walking speed in pwMS.

Methods: Twenty-four pwMS (14F/10M; 16 relapsing-remitting, 8 secondary progressive; EDSS 5.4 ± 1.1; age 59 ± 11 years) completed a double-blind, randomized crossover trial comparing AIH (15 cycles of 60s at 9% O_2 alternating with normoxia) to sham, with four-week washout. Ankle plantarflexion maximal voluntary contraction (MVC), Timed 25-Foot Walk (T25FW), and Six-Minute Walk Test (6MWT) were assessed pre-intervention, post-intervention (day 5), and at one-week follow-up. ANCOVA adjusted for age, sex, MS type, disease duration, EDSS, and baseline values.

Results: Plantarflexion MVC increased significantly after AIH (+17.5% post, +29.2% follow-up; $p < 0.001$); sham was unchanged. 6MWT improved by an estimated 10.1 meters after AIH relative to sham ($p = 0.039$). T25FW improved post-AIH but was not significant. Heart rate elevation during hypoxic bouts correlated with strength gains ($r = 0.58$, $p = 0.009$).

Conclusions: Repetitive AIH produced significant gains in plantarflexion strength and walking endurance in pwMS. These results warrant investigation of AIH combined with rehabilitative training to enhance neuroplasticity in MS.

91 Non-Invasive Neuromodulation Transforms Rehabilitation Outcomes in Progressive Multiple Sclerosis: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background

Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (PMS) lacks effective pharmacological treatments for symptoms like spasticity, fatigue, and declining mobility. This synthesis evaluates the efficacy and feasibility of non-invasive neuromodulation (NM) techniques, including functional electrical stimulation (FES), neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES), and transcranial stimulation (TMS/tDCS/iTBS), as supportive neurorehabilitation for PMS.

Methods

A systematic review and narrative synthesis assessed studies published between 2000 and 2025 that reported NM effects on PMS symptoms, focusing on quantified outcomes, tolerability, and adherence.

Results

Twelve identified NM interventions showed significant clinical impact and high feasibility. Central stimulation (TMS/iTBS) significantly reduced objective spasticity (MAS, $p < 0.001$), with iTBS effects lasting up to 12 weeks (effect size: 1.5 points, 95% CI: -2.1, 0.8). FES and NMES cycling significantly enhanced functional mobility over six months, resulting in a 13% mean increase in walking distance, a 36% acceleration in walking speed, and up to a 95% reduction in falls. Furthermore, fine motor control was significantly improved by remotely supervised tDCS (RS-tDCS) paired with exercise, with a mean improvement of -5.85 ± 6.19 s on the 9HPT ($p=0.049$). Even typically refractory symptoms responded to neuromodulation: hybrid FES training reduced fatigue ($p=0.04$), HF-rTMS significantly alleviated pain, and RS-tDCS produced measurable improvements in quality of life ($p=0.04$). High compliance was consistent across all modalities, for instance, RS-tDCS achieved 98% adherence (≥18/20 sessions).

Conclusion

NM interventions are safe, highly feasible, and effective adjuncts to rehabilitation for PMS. They provide targeted, measurable benefits across key domains including spasticity, mobility, and fine motor function.

92 Dose-response effects of supervised power-oriented resistance training on lower extremity muscle power and physical function in people with multiple sclerosis – secondary data from the NEXIMS randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

Background: Muscle power is a key determinant of physical function and health in people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS). However, no power-oriented resistance training (PowRT) studies have investigated dose-response relationships between weekly session frequency and adaptations. To address this, we conducted a 10-week randomized controlled trial.

Methods: Sixty pwMS (72% female, age 54±12 years, PDDS 2.3±1.9, disease duration 12±10 years, 70% relapsing-remitting) were randomized (1:1:1) to 10 weeks of high-dose PowRT (HD-PowRT; 2.5 sessions/wk), low-dose PowRT (LD-PowRT; 1 session/wk) or control (CTRL). Outcomes included 5 x sit-to-stand muscle power (5STS_power), 9-step stair ascend muscle power (9SSA_power), 6-minute walk test (6MWT), and 12-item MS walking scale (MSWS12).

Results: Following the 10-week intervention period, improvements followed a dose-response pattern (HD-PowRT > LD-PowRT > CTRL). Significant between-group improvements ($p<0.01$) were observed for 5STS_power (0.99 [0.68;1.30] vs 0.36 [0.02;0.70] vs 0.22 [-0.10;0.54] W/kg; *corresponding to 24 vs 6 vs 6 %*), 9SSA_power (0.52 [0.32;0.71] vs 0.21 [0.00;0.43] vs -0.17 [-0.37;0.04] W/kg; *15 vs 2 vs -4 %*), and 6MWT (39 [24;54] vs 10 [-6;26] vs 3 [-12;18] m; *9 vs 4 vs 1 %*), alongside reductions ($p<0.01$) in MSWS12 (-11 [-17;-4] vs -6 [-13;2] vs -2 [-10;5] points; *-40 vs -23 vs -14 %*).

Conclusion: In the first PowRT study in pwMS we demonstrate a dose-response relationship between weekly training frequency and improvements in lower extremity muscle power and physical function. These findings emphasize PowRT and training dosage importance, providing valuable insights for developing future exercise guidelines for pwMS.

93 Disruptions in one's own body perception in people with multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Sensorimotor deficits disrupt interactions with the environment and interfere with the continuous flow of multisensory signals to/from the body. Such disruptions may alter body perception (BP), including changes in limb ownership (e.g., 'this limb no longer belongs to my body'). Although BP alterations have been documented in several neurological conditions leading to sensorimotor deficits, they remain largely unexplored in multiple sclerosis.

Here, we aim to identify the presence and frequency of BP alterations in a large cohort of people with MS (PwMS) using an online survey based on the Affected Limb Perception Questionnaire (ALPQ). This new tool adapted for MS captures the frequency and severity of a broad range of BP changes, including altered ownership, perceived temperature and weight in the upper or lower limbs (UL/LL).

Findings from 203 PwMS (mean age: 52.7±11.3; disease duration: 15.1±11; EDSS: 3.9±1.9) showed frequent BP alterations (at least 1 reported alteration in 50% of patients for UL and 85% for LL), particularly in changes in ownership (UL: 27%; LL:48%), perceived temperature (UL: 30%; LL: 62:%) and weight (UL:23%; LL:89:%), involuntary movements (UL: 21%; LL: 48%). The intensity and frequency of the UL- and LL- BP modifications significantly correlate with the self-reported disability status (EDSS, $p<.001$), with greater alterations being associated with higher disability levels.

By revealing a neglected dimension of BP in MS, our findings may highlight clinically relevant patterns that could refine diagnostic profiling and guide personalized interventions, where BP and multisensory stimulation are integrated into sensorimotor rehabilitation.

96 Feasibility and Outcomes of a 6-Month Exercise & Wellness Program in Community-Dwelling Persons with Multiple Sclerosis: A Cohort Observational Study

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Abstract

Background: While exercise is strongly recommended for individuals with MS, few reach the exercise level recommended by evidence-based guidelines. The aims of this study were to determine the feasibility, safety, and outcomes of an exercise and wellness program for community-dwelling individuals with disability related to MS.

Methods: In this pre-post intervention uncontrolled study, individuals with MS (age 51.5 +/- 11.6 years, 67% women, 67% using a walking aid) participated in supervised aerobic and strengthening exercise classes (3x/week) and biweekly wellness education classes over 6 months at 2 community-based clinic sites. Outcomes were assessed at baseline (BL), midpoint, and end-of-treatment (EOT) and included the 6-Minute Walk Test (6MWT), Box and Blocks Test (BBT), strength, International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) Short Form, physical activity monitoring, Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) questionnaires and Quality of Life in Neurological Disorders (Neuro-QOL) cognitive function questionnaire.

Results: All of the 6 enrolled participants completed the 6-month program, attending 78% of exercise sessions. Two adverse events unrelated to the intervention occurred in 2 participants. Three (50%) participants exceeded the MCID between BL and EOT on 6MWT, and 4 (67%) exceeded the MCID on the BBT for both upper extremities. Improved activity levels (13% increase in daily step count and 58% in MET-min/week) were also observed. Health-related QOL questionnaires demonstrated modest improvements.

Conclusion: The 6-month exercise and wellness program was feasible, well tolerated and safe. Clinically significant gains in physical activity, walking capacity, and upper extremity function were observed in at least one-half of the participants.

98 Can adapted physical activity provide valuable complementary support when physiotherapy offers benefits for a intermittent period? Preliminary results from a prospective observational pilot study.

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Abstract

Background

Maintaining functional mobility and walking endurance is a major challenge for individuals with multiple sclerosis. We aimed to evaluate the association between an 8-month adapted physical activity (APA) program and changes in walking endurance, as measured by the Six-Minute Walk Test (6MWT).

Methods

Eighteen participants were included in a pilot prospective observational study with repeated measures: n=10 in the APA cohort (age 60 ± 20.7 years, EDSS 2.35 ± 1.06, 5F:5M) performing exercise twice weekly, and n=8 in the usual care (REHAB) cohort (age 48.5 ± 14.2 years, EDSS 2.87 ± 1.70, 8F) followed by the AISM Rehabilitation Service Liguria. Assessments were performed at three time points (T0, T1, T2, 4-month intervals) including 6MWT, 30-s Sit-to-Stand (30STS), Timed Up and Go (TUG), Sit-and-Reach (SnR), and Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS).

Results

Significant time effects were observed for 6MWT (p=0.020), TUG (p=0.027), and SnR (right p=0.009, left p=0.004). No significant time effects were found for 30STS and MFIS (p>0.05). Post-hoc analyses showed consistent improvements from baseline to 4 and 8 months in the APA group for outcomes with significant time effects, while REHAB showed variable changes. No significant group×time interactions were observed, indicating similar overall trajectories.

Discussion

An 8-month APA program was associated with sustained improvements in walking endurance, functional mobility, and flexibility, while lower limb strength and impact of fatigue remained unchanged. Gains in APA were consistent across time points, whereas REHAB responses were variable, likely associated to the amount of rehabilitation received. Continued APA may support functional improvements alongside standard rehabilitation.

102 Effects of Neuromuscular Exercise Training Focused on the Upper Extremity on Physical and Cognitive Functions in People with Multiple Sclerosis (NExTUp): A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate effects of NExTUp, a structured neuromuscular exercise training program focused on upper extremity (UE), on physical and cognitive functions in early-stage people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS).

Methods: Forty-eight pwMS were randomly assigned to an exercise group (EG) or control group (CG). UE function was assessed using 9-Hole Peg Test, Minnesota Manual Dexterity Test, and Manual Ability Measure-36; lower extremity function with Timed 25-Foot Walk Test; and cognitive function with Symbol Digit Modalities Test. Joint position sense, coordination, and reaction speed were evaluated using Laser Pointer Active Angle Repetition Test, 15-White Dot Test, and BlazePod™, respectively. Elbow flexion muscle and hand grip strength, postural stability, core strength and endurance, and fatigue were also assessed. EG completed an 8-week, clinic-based program (1 hour/session, 2 sessions/week) consisting of 12 UE–focused neuromuscular training stations, while CG maintained usual activities. EG was followed for an additional 4 weeks.

Results: Forty-five participants completed study. After 8 weeks, EG showed significant improvements across all outcomes except postural stability ($p<0.01$), whereas no significant changes were observed in CG ($p>0.01$). Between-group comparisons of change scores (post-pre) demonstrated significant differences favoring EG for most outcomes ($p<0.01$), except for cognition and some postural stability parameters. Improvements were maintained at 1-month follow-up.

Conclusion: NExTUp is an effective intervention for improving both physical and cognitive functions in early-stage pwMS. These findings suggest that targeting UE may extend beyond local effects, contributing to improvements across multiple functional domains, highlighting importance of incorporating UE–focused training into MS rehabilitation.

105 Brain and core temperature changes with a neck cooling collar in heat-sensitive people with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background: Heat sensitivity affects up to 80% of people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS), causing temporary symptom worsening with increased body temperature. Cooled neck collars have shown to be feasible to implement and to potentially reduce brain temperature and thermal discomfort in healthy populations. Given the temperature sensitivity of demyelinated neurons, their effects in heat-sensitive pwMS warrant investigation.

Methods: Eight heat-sensitive pwMS (6 female, 2 male, aged 45–73 years) participated in a randomised cross-over feasibility trial. Brain, rectal, skin and perceptual temperatures were recorded at rest under two conditions: 15-minute cooled neck collar application; and no cooling.

Results: Data collection is ongoing, and full findings will be reported. Preliminary data from six participants (with complete paired data for two) indicate trends towards increases in brain and rectal temperatures in the no-cooling condition (brain: +0.44°C [range: +0.128 to +1.151°C]; rectal: +0.12°C [range: -0.02 to +0.23°C]). With cooling, rectal temperatures tended to reduce (-0.18°C [range: -0.34 to +0.01°C]), and two of three participants' brain temperatures increased (+0.516 [range -1.086 to +1.319]). Greater changes in perceptual and skin temperature were observed with cooling.

Conclusion: To our knowledge this is the first study investigating the effects of a cooled neck collar on brain temperature in pwMS. Individual variability in temperature responses highlights the complex underlying mechanisms and will inform future sample size calculations. The completed dataset may provide mechanistic insights into the contributions of physiological and perceptual temperature changes to the functional benefits of cooling observed in pwMS.

110 Immediate Effects of Combined Action Observation and Motor Imagery on Spatiotemporal Gait in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background:
Gait impairment is one of the most common and disabling symptoms in individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS). Action observation combined with motor imagery (AOMI) has been suggested to enhance sensorimotor activation more effectively than either approach alone; however, its immediate effects on gait parameters remain unclear.

Methods:
Nineteen individuals with MS were randomly allocated to an intervention group (n=11) or a control group (n=8). The intervention group received a single 20-minute session of walking-based action observation combined with motor imagery, while the control group watched non-motor nature videos. Spatiotemporal gait parameters were assessed using the GAITRite system before and after the intervention.

Results:
A significant group × time interaction was found for cadence ($p = 0.023$, $\eta^2p = 0.267$), with a decrease in the intervention group and an increase in the control group. Gait speed showed a trend toward significance ($p = 0.063$, $\eta^2p = 0.189$), with a similar opposite directional change. No significant interaction effects were observed for other gait parameters ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusion:
A single session of AOMI appears to selectively influence temporal aspects of gait in individuals with MS, particularly cadence. The reduction in cadence and trend toward decreased gait speed in the intervention group may reflect a more controlled gait pattern. The increase in the control group may be related to task familiarization and the relaxing effects of non-motor visual input. Overall, the findings suggest modulation of gait control rather than direct improvement in performance.

Keywords: action observation, motor imagery, multiple sclerosis, spatiotemporal gait

112 How to encourage increased physical activity in newly diagnosed patients?

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Abstract

Background

The beneficial effects of regular physical activity for people with MS have been documented in numerous studies. Ideally, patients should be educated about the importance of physical activity, and interventions in this area should begin shortly after diagnosis. Therefore, the goal was to conduct a pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness of a 3-month program designed to increase physical activity among newly diagnosed patients.

Methods

The participants were non randomisely divided into Group 1 (motivation to exercise using pedometers and regular contact with a physical therapist), Group 2 (motivation to exercise using pedometers, dietary counseling, and regular contact with a healthy lifestyle coach), and Group 3 (a control group with no lifestyle changes). Before the start and after the end of the program, participants underwent spirometry and functional mobility tests (25-foot time walk test-T25FT, 2-minute walk test-2MW, Timed Up and Go test-TUG, and nine-ball test), as well as assessments of treatment outcomes (MFIS, HADS, FESI).

Results

A total of 33 newly diagnosed patients participated in the program (disease duration less than 3 years). Group 1 showed improvements in gait parameters: T25FT ($p=0.017$), 2MW ($p=0.006$) and TUG ($p=0.002$). Only Group 2 showed improvements in VO2/kg ($p=0.026$), maximum heart rate ($p=0.002$), and Wmax ($p=0.021$). Additionally, there was a reduction in fatigue ($p=0.025$) and anxiety ($p=0.043$).

Conclusions

Based on this small pilot study, it appears that encouragement to exercise and dietary counseling provided individually by a healthy lifestyle coach may be effective in improving physical fitness.

115 The effects of trunk rehabilitation on balance, gait, falls, and communitymobility in patients with multiple sclerosis: A single-blind randomizedcontrolled trial

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) impairs daily living and social engagement, reducing people's overall quality of life. Trunk impairment in people with MS (PwMS) is closely linked to balance deficits, gait disturbances, and increased risk of falls. Targeted trunk rehabilitation may improve these outcomes.

Purpose: Investigate the effectiveness of dynamic trunk-focused rehabilitation in PwMS.

Methods: Forty-five PwMS were randomly assigned to either a trunk or core group. Trunk group received multiplanar trunk exercises on unstable surfaces combined with dual-task training. Core group performed traditional core stability exercises. Both received conventional therapy. The primary outcome was the Trunk Impairment Scale (TIS), and secondary outcomes included Berg Balance Scale (BBS), Timed Up and Go (TUG), Modified Falls Efficacy Scale (MFES), Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS), Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), and Reintegration to Normal Living Index (RNLI). A two-way mixed model ANOVA assessed time-by-group interactions.

Results: Trunk group showed significantly greater improvements across all outcomes. Significant time-by-group interactions were observed for trunk control (TIS, $F=18.3$, $P\leq0.001$), balance (BBS, $F=13.2$, $P\leq0.001$), mobility (TUG, $F= 3.9$, $P=0.05$), and community reintegration (RNLI, $F=7.6$, $P=0.01$). Improvements in fall prevention confidence (MFES, $F=16.4$, $P\leq0.001$), fatigue reduction (MFIS, $F=8.3$, $P=0.007$), and psychological well-being (HADS, $F=4.5$, $P=0.04$) were also significantly greater in the trunk group.

Conclusion: Dynamic trunk-focused interventions incorporating multiplanar movements on unstable surfaces along with dual-task training offer superior benefits over standard core stability exercises. These findings support the incorporation of dynamic trunk rehabilitation as a key component of MS rehabilitation protocols.

122 The Effects of Structured Exercise Training on Functional and Cognitive Trajectories in Newly Diagnosed Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effects of a structured exercise training program on physical and cognitive performance parameters in people with newly diagnosed multiple sclerosis (MS). A total of 49 patients were included and randomly assigned to either the structured exercise group (SEG) or the control group (CG). All participants with MS, as well as a healthy control group (HG), were initially evaluated in terms of muscle strength, postural sway, trunk strength and endurance, functional mobility, hand dexterity, cognitive function, and fatigue severity. The SEG received structured exercise training twice a week for 8 weeks in addition to routine disease-modifying therapy, whereas the CG was followed only with disease-modifying therapy. The SEG and CG were reassessed at weeks 8 and 24. A total of seven patients were excluded during the 8- and 24-week follow-ups, and the study was completed with 42 patients (SEG=22, CG=20). Compared with HG, people with MS showed significant impairments in all parameters except postural sway on a firm surface with eyes open, visual and verbal memory, and the curl-up test. Following the 8-week exercise intervention, the SEG showed improvements in many functional parameters, while the CG demonstrated declines in some and stability in others. Structured exercise training may positively influence the course of the disease by slowing the progression of existing impairments and delaying the development of new impairments. Structured exercise training should be initiated at diagnosis alongside disease-modifying therapies and sustained throughout the disease course.

Participation, autonomy & life roles, incl. bladder and bowel and sexuality in Multiple Sclerosis and related disorders

This chapter highlights the importance of empowering people with MS to take an active role in symptom management to maintain autonomy, participation, and quality of life. It brings attention to urogenital dysfunction, a common yet often under-recognized condition with significant clinical consequences. By promoting awareness and introducing practical tools to support early identification and shared decision-making, the chapter addresses a critical gap in care. This contributes to improved outcomes and aligns with the broader goals of recovery and compensation in MS.

1 Balancing participation and fall risk – a constant ongoing process

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Abstract

Background: Participation is a central concept within rehabilitation. It is recommended to consider participation as a real-world outcome in multiple sclerosis (MS) falls-prevention research. Being at risk of falling may lead to restricted participation in various life areas.

Objective. To explore how people with MS (PwMS) experience how living with risk of falling impacts participation at present, and strategies used to maintain participation onwards.

Methods 12 PwMS that had experienced ≥1 fall during the last year and were not using walking device continuously were invited to participate in individual interviews, using a semi-structured interview guide. Transcriptions were analysed using inductive content analysis.

Results. The analysis process resulted in an overarching theme: *Balancing participation and fall risk* based on six subthemes. The informants described actions taken to remain one in the work force, strategies used to be able to participate in social and civic life, and how they strived to continue with homebased activities. They faced challenges in working life, at home and beyond the confines of home by balancing heavy and light work tasks, shifting tasks, shifting means of transport, planning for handling variation in symptoms, organising activities to minimize need for long-time standing and longer walking distances, asking for help and restricting being in busy surroundings or gatherings.

Conclusions

PwMS constantly need to find strategies to overcome hurdles due to fall risk to maintain participation. We recommend professionals to pay attention to potential participation restrictions in their dialogues with PwMS and discuss strategies to overcome the restrictions.

3 Development and Validation of the questionnaire for bladder and bowel symptoms screening in MS patients

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Abstract

MS is a major cause of lower urinary tract (LUT) and bowel dysfunction. Recently, a group of Italian experts developed a promising comprehensive and patient-oriented hybrid questionnaire in Italian language on bladder and bowel symptoms for MS, following a Delphi model. The upcoming study aims to validate the new questionnaire as part of the overall patient assessment. The questionnaire will be submitted to 160 patients attending the clinic for their first visit, none of whom will have previously undergone a specific evaluation for urinary or faecal disorders. The questionnaire results will be validated through two independent specialist assessments conducted by centralized experts. These assessments will then be cross checked against the hybrid questionnaire scores to determine how accurately the questionnaire identifies bladder or bowel problems. The new hybrid questionnaire will be completed by the patient and consists of 9 questions on bladder habits and 12 questions on bowel habits. Internal consistency will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, calculated on all items and separately on the items on urinary and bowel problems. The test-retest will be assessed by intraclass correlation or Pearson correlation on 20 patients completing the questionnaire twice. The implementation of the hybrid questionnaire in Italian clinical settings is expected to improve the early identification and management of bladder and bowel dysfunctions, thereby supporting earlier intervention and potentially improving patient outcomes.

6 Development, validation and clinical use of MS bladder check – A patient self-assessment tool to promote timely treatment of bladder problems

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Abstract

Introduction

Lower urinary tract dysfunction (LUTD) is common in people with MS yet under-recognised and undertreated. Objective: To develop/validate a brief patient self-assessment tool and assess its perceived clinical utility in routine practice.

Methods

Development/validation:A multidisciplinary panel created a 9-item lay-language checklist covering key LUTD domains, with iterative patient testing and international expert content validation. Assessment: 32 HCPs introduced the checklist in their clinics. Patients were asked to take the checklist prior to their consultation followed by a short questionnaire to rate impact on patient awareness and dialog.

Results

Validation:International experts rated all items excellent after the second validation round, indicating that the MS bladder check tool is an appropriate method of highlighting bladder problems in people with MS.

Assessment:Patients (N=503) agreed that the MS bladder check helps them understand the impact MS can have on the bladder function (74%) and makes it easier to talk about bladder symptoms (70%). 28% of patients firstly realized they had or previously had experienced a bladder issue after taking the MS bladder check. The majority (83%) of the HCPs agree that MS bladder check supports them in their daily work and when asked, they say that MS bladder check leads to a more productive dialogue, helping to concretely objectify the problems with their patients.

Conclusions

The MS bladder check is a brief, validated self-assessment tool that empowers patients and supports timely, structured clinic discussions, with strong clinician endorsement for awareness, communication, and early treatment.

7 Exploring Community Mobility in Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background:

People with MS (PwMS) experience various functional impairments, including muscle weakness, fatigue, balance difficulties, and psychological symptoms. Consequently, maintaining prolonged mobility presents significant challenges, impacting their community mobility and participation. Quantitative studies have identified that mobility is significantly influenced by balance issues, the incidence of falls, and fatigue.

While community mobility is crucial for sustaining healthy participation, there is a paucity of qualitative evidence examining the community mobility experience. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate the experience of community mobility from the patients' perspective in order to: 1) identify the factors influencing their community mobility, and 2) discern the secondary elements related to the fundamental domains, including balance, falling, and fatigue.

Methods:

Eleven patients were recruited for the study and participated in semi-structured, audio-recorded face-to-face interviews. The study utilized qualitative data analysis software and adhered to the Braun and Clarke approach to analyze transcripts.

Results:

The analysis identified four principal themes and ten sub-themes, which are as follows: The primary themes include: (1) External and environmental barriers, (2) Internal physical and emotional limitations, (3) Decisions guided by awareness, and (4) Accessibility and public service considerations.

Conclusion:

The findings acknowledge the distinct experiences of patients in Saudi Arabia, considering their environmental and cultural contexts. Furthermore, they underscore the necessity for collaboration between medical rehabilitation institutions and other governmental entities to implement various strategies aimed at enhancing community mobility. This can be achieved by improving public facilities and services, as well as increasing the level of public awareness.

14 Transanal irrigation (TAI) practices in Dutch Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients – a retrospective survey

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Abstract

Approximately 75% of Dutch MS patients suffer from fecal incontinence and/or constipation and 60% of them have not yet found a satisfactory solution for their bowel problems. From MS patients that use TAI for their bowel management, little is still known about the used TAI volume, frequency, impact on daily life and drop-out rates.

To investigate TAI characteristics in MS patients in more detail, a small retrospective survey was initiated in a group of 25 patients using TAI (Peristeen® Plus, Coloplast B.V.). Patients were interviewed using a combination of on-line questionnaires and phone interviews.

The large majority (52%) received their initial Peristeen Plus prescription in hospital, and had been using TAI for more than 2 years (56%). The TAI-volumes used ranged from 300-2.000 ml with a majority (76%) using between 400-1.000 ml per TAI-procedure, and 48% performing the TAI procedure daily, and 16% performing it every other day. The large majority (72%) of MS patients could perform their TAI routine independently without the help of others, and 76% indicated that TAI was an added value to their daily lives. Moreover, 68% of MS patients declared that TAI fitted well with their lifestyles.

Dutch MS patients were satisfied with their TAI treatment, which they considered an added value to their daily lives, and they managed to fit well within their respective lifestyles. Most MS patients had been using TAI for > 2 years, with irrigation volumes between 800-1.000 ml on a daily basis to effectively manage bowel issues.

21 Evaluation of an Online Nutrition Program (NutriMS-Plus) for People with Multiple Sclerosis: Results from a randomized controlled pilot trial (pilot RCT)

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Abstract

Background: People with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) are confronted with conflicting information about the influence of nutrition on MS, which makes adjustment of dietary habits difficult. To address this problem, we designed an MS-specific evidence-based online nutrition education and behaviour change program (NutriMS-Plus).

Objective: To test the feasibility and acceptance of NutriMS-Plus and to collect preliminary effectiveness data on nutrition-related outcomes.

Method: We evaluated NutriMS-Plus, consisting of 12 modules, in a pre-registered pilot RCT. Eligible participants were randomized into three groups: IG 1: NutriMS-Plus; IG 2: NutriMS-Plus and individual online nutritional counselling; CG: waitlist control group. Measurements were taken at baseline and 12 weeks after randomization. Feasibility outcomes included recruitment success, practicality, adherence and acceptance. Nutrition-related outcomes were MS-specific nutrition knowledge (MSNKQ), MS-specific food literacy (MSFLQ) and diet quality (sDQS).

Results: Between June and September 2025, 57 pwMS (89.5% female, mean age 43.8 y, mean disease duration 8.6 y, mean PDDS 1.9) were recruited. On average, IG participants completed 11.7 (IG1) and 11.5 (IG2) modules. All participants completed the study and usability of the online platform was rated very good. Acceptance as measured with the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability Questionnaire exceeded the benchmark of 3 (range 1-5) in both intervention groups (IG1: 3.8; IG2: 4.0), thus indicating high acceptance. Significant improvements in MSNKQ, MSFLQ and sDQS were observed in IG1 and IG2 compared to the CG, with a trend to better results in IG2.

Conclusion: All predefined progression criteria were met. NutriMS-Plus will now be tested in a full scale RCT.

36 What matters to whom? Identifying patient priority profiles in short-term MS rehabilitation.

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Abstract

Background

Inpatient rehabilitation programmes are typically organized around clinicians' assessments of patients' best interests, yet less is known about how patients prioritize different rehabilitation domains themselves. The aim of this retrospective analysis is to understand inpatients' priorities in short-term rehabilitation trajectories.

Methods

Prior to admission to a 3-4 week rehabilitation programme, patients with MS completed a questionnaire assessing the priority they assigned to a range of rehabilitation domains. Associations between demographic and clinical characteristics and priority ratings were examined using non-parametric statistics.

Results

Preliminary analyses of 270 inpatients with MS revealed several systematic patterns in patient-reported priorities. Younger patients assigned higher priority to sexuality & intimacy (rs = -.207, p = .001), emotions & purpose (rs = -.183, p = .002) and professional functioning & education (rs = -.210, p = .001). Women gave a higher median priority score to emotions & purpose (U = 9805, p = .040), whereas men prioritized sexuality & intimacy to a larger extent (U = 7327, p = .034). Higher disability levels (EDSS scores) were associated with greater prioritization of transfers (rs = .335 p = .008), but lower prioritization of lifestyle (rs = -.293, p = .022), emotions & purpose (rs = -.350, p = .006), and recreational activities (rs = -.298, p = .020).

Discussion

The interpretation of these findings will be further refined by exploring these factors in a latent profile analysis. These profiles are expected to support more personalized goal-setting and more efficient allocation of rehabilitation resources in short-term inpatient programmes.

37 Developing a Shared Multidisciplinary Vision on Positioning in Multiple Sclerosis: Baseline Evaluation, Training Pathway and Implementation Strategy

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Abstract

Background: Optimising seating and lying positioning for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) is essential for comfort, functional performance and the prevention of complications such as pressure injuries. To improve consistency and quality of positioning practices, the National MS Center established a multidisciplinary working group to develop a shared vision and translate it into a sustainable training programme for all involved disciplines. This project examined how a unified approach and structured training could enhance positioning quality, and which needs and experiences were identified by staff and patients.

Methods: A positioning check was developed for use by both staff and persons with MS. During a baseline measurement, 100 inpatients were systematically assessed over one week regarding their positioning in bed and wheelchair. A self-developed observation checklist is used. [DK1] In parallel, staff and patient surveys were conducted to map current skills, perceived responsibilities and unmet needs. Findings informed the design of a training programme comprising discipline-specific and interdisciplinary learning objectives aimed at improving positioning competencies and fostering interprofessional collaboration. An implementation plan is being developed to embed the acquired knowledge structurally into onboarding and continuous professional development.

Expected results: Anticipated outcomes include improved positioning adapted to daily activities, enhanced functional performance, reduced complication risk and clearer role distribution across disciplines.

Conclusion: This project suggest that a systematic, interdisciplinary approach has the potential to support quality improvement in MS care and may evolve into a transferable model for other rehabilitation settings where positioning is a key component of practice.

52 Beyond Mobility: An AI-Enabled Personalized Narrative Intervention to Address Family Participation in Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation - Case Study.

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, multidimensional condition affecting not only body functions but also participation in meaningful life roles, including parenting. Within the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) framework, participation restrictions, particularly in family roles are often under-addressed. Communicating disease-related changes to young children represents a significant challenge.

Objective: To describe an innovative, personalized, AI assisted narrative intervention aimed at improving parent-child interaction and participation in a patient with MS.

Case Description: A 36 year-old man with MS (EDSS 5) was admitted for inpatient rehabilitation due to recurrent falls, instability and fatigue. These impairments led to activity limitations and significant participation restrictions, including withdrawal from his parental role. His two daughters unaware of his condition, had developed fear and avoidance behaviors.

Intervention: In addition to multidisciplinary rehabilitation, a personalized children's storybook was developed near discharge using an AI platform. Guided by clinical insight, the narrative translated disease-related impairments into age-appropriate metaphors (e.g., fatigue as a "battery," weakness as "spaghetti legs") and reframed the walking aid as a supportive "helper." The story incorporated personalized family elements and provided children with concrete ways to engage and respond.

Outcomes: The patient reported significant emotional impact and meaningful engagement, including shared reading with his children.

Conclusion: This case highlights the importance of addressing participation-level challenges in MS rehabilitation. AI-enabled personalized storytelling represents a feasible and innovative approach to bridging communication gaps and supporting family-centered care. Such interventions may expand the scope of rehabilitation beyond traditional domains toward more holistic, person-centered models.

56 Social Participation Through Attendance at Concert Performances in Rehabilitation

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Abstract

A new activity was introduced into the inpatient rehabilitation program in which people with MS attend a one-hour concert in a concert hall of Brussels. This initiative, organized by the music therapist in collaboration with the social services department, aims to enhance social participation as a core health objective and to help prevention of social isolation. The aim of this project to explore participants' experiences with the activity and perceived benefits.

Within one week following the concert, we performed individual interviews with participants.

So far, eight pwMS with a variety in the use of mobility aids (scooter, manual wheelchair, cane, or electric wheelchair) were interviewed. Five participants indicated that they would also like to attend concerts outside the rehabilitation setting, while three expressed less interest in doing so.

Participants identified several barriers to participation in community-based cultural activities, including mobility challenges (e.g., traveling with a scooter), limited toilet accessibility, the need for personal assistance, and uncertainties related to parking. Overall, the duration and structure of the activity were considered appropriate. The positive evaluations were partly attributed to the fact that practical obstacles—such as parking and organizational logistics—were addressed within the rehabilitation program.

These findings suggest that cultural activities can meaningfully support social participation and well-being during rehabilitation. However, to facilitate sustained participation beyond the clinical setting, both individualized support (micro-level) and broader structural measures (macro-level), such as accessible infrastructure and transportation, are essential.

58 Access to Inpatient Medical and Rehabilitation Care for Patients with Multiple Sclerosis: A Nationwide French Analysis Using the SNDS (2017–2023)

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Abstract

Background

Inpatient stays in Medical and Rehabilitation Care (MRC) units help maintain functional independence and limit disability progression in patients with multiple sclerosis (PwMS). Access to MRC may however be unevenly distributed across socioeconomic and geographical strata in France.

Objectives

To analyse MRC utilisation trends among PwMS in France (2017–2023) and identify socioeconomic and geographical inequalities in access.

Methods

PwMS were identified from the French National Health Data System (SNDS) using a validated algorithm combining long-term disease registration, MS-related hospital admissions, and disease-modifying drug reimbursements (2012–2021). From this prevalent cohort, all MRC stays were identified between 2017 and 2023, stratified by administrative district and the French social deprivation index (FDep).

Results

The study included 130,015 PwMS (72.1% female; mean age 54.0 ± 14.5 years). In 2023, 9.5% had at least one MRC stay; 81.3% were MS-related, predominantly day-care admissions (67.8%). Annual MRC admissions grew by 6.8%/year from 2017 to 2019, dropped 16.7% in 2020 (COVID-19 impact), then rebounded at 9.6%/year through 2023. Utilisation was higher in males, patients over 50, and those with disease duration exceeding 15 years. Patients from the most deprived areas showed slightly higher rates (8.4% vs. 7.7%). Marked inter-regional disparities persisted, with utilisation ranging from <5% to >15% across districts.

Conclusions

MRC utilisation increased overall despite a temporary COVID-related decline. Age, sex, and disease duration are key access determinants. Persistent geographical and socioeconomic disparities highlight the need for more equitable rehabilitation provision across France.

59 Development and validation of the Multiple Sclerosis Autonomy Scale (MSAS)

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Abstract

BACKGROUND

Autonomy, based on the ability to fulfill the roles that matter most to oneself, is poorly covered by existing MS scales, which are often symptom- or disability-centered. A new tool is needed.

OBJECTIVES

Develop and validate the psychometric properties of the MSAS, a Patient-Reported Outcome (PRO) co-developed with patients and care teams, in accordance with FDA guidelines.

METHODS

The Ambition Autonomy project guided the development of the MSAS via qualitative interviews (20 patients, 12 healthcare professionals). The baseline MSAS (131 items, 13 dimensions) was refined in FOCAL-MS 1 to 36 items/10 dimensions based on feedback from 653 patients and robust psychometric analyses. The FOCAL-MS 2 study (186 patients) evaluated structure, test-retest reliability, and convergent/discriminant validity vs the EDSS.

RESULTS

The final MSAS (35 items, 10 dimensions) demonstrates excellent reliability (α=0.92; ICC=0.90) and low correlation with the EDSS (r=0.26), confirming that it captures dimensions of autonomy distinct from neurological disability as measured by the EDSS. The median completion time of the questionnaire is 8 minutes, favoring its clinical integration. The dual rating of impact and importance for each dimension allows a fine-tuned and personalized assessment of lived autonomy.

CONCLUSION

Co-constructed with patients at every stage of development, the MSAS offers a robust, unique measure of autonomy — combining impact and importance ratings for a comprehensive, individualized assessment that complements existing symptom- and disability-centered MS scales.

62 Management of Heat Sensitivity in Persons with MS: A Cross-sectional Analysis of a Survey Conducted by the Swiss Multiple Sclerosis Registry

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Abstract

Introduction: Many persons with MS (pwMS) are temperature-sensitive, most of them to heat. Cooling can counteract the transient symptom worsening caused by heat exposure, and improve quality of life. However, evidence on awareness and use of different cooling methods (CMs) is limited.

Aim: To assess the frequency of temperature sensitivity in pwMS and examine awareness and use of different CMs in a real-world setting.

Methods: This cross-sectional analysis included data from 760 respondents of a thematic survey on temperature sensitivity and CMs conducted by the Swiss Multiple Sclerosis Registry. Descriptive statistics and logistic regression analyses were performed.

Results: Overall, 73.3% of respondents reported being temperature-sensitive (heat: 48.8%, heat+cold: 18%, cold: 6.4%). 471 (62%) respondents were aware of CMs. Most frequently cited sources of information were the Swiss MS Society (58.2%), peers with MS (23.8%) and physiotherapists (16.1%). Of the 348 respondents who reported being sensitive to heat or heat+cold and who were aware of CMs, 154 (44.3%) used them, most frequently cold showers (48.7%), ventilators (46.1%), and cooling cloths (33.8%). Awareness was associated with sex, symptom burden, temperature sensitivity, and region of residence. Use was associated with Swiss citizenship.

Discussion: Although many heat-sensitive respondents are aware of CMs, they do not use them. As various CMs are used, it is difficult to provide uniform recommendations on their practical application. Reasons for non-use and perceived effectiveness of individual CMs still need to be investigated, as do the reasons why healthcare professionals may not be advising pwMS sufficiently on CMs.

65 Understanding Productivity Loss in Multiple Sclerosis: Indirect Costs, Work-Related Quality of Life, and Resource Use

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Abstract

Introduction

Multiple sclerosis (MS) commonly affects individuals during their prime working years, reducing work capacity and quality of life. This study is part of a broader research project funded by INAIL (Bando BRiC 2022, ID 31), titled "RiaL SM: The rehabilitation approach as a qualifying factor in the evaluation of reasonable accommodation in workers with Multiple Sclerosis." The cross-sectional survey presented here constitutes the initial exploratory phase of the RiaL SM project. Within this framework, the study aimed to evaluate work productivity loss, work-related quality of life (WRQoL), and healthcare and social resource utilization among Italian workers with MS (WwMS), and identify predictors of productivity-related indirect costs.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted on 160 WwMS in Italy. Work productivity and activity impairment were assessed using the WPAI:MS, and work-related difficulties with the MSQ-Job. WRQoL and healthcare and social resource utilization were measured using validated instruments. Productivity losses were monetized using national wage data. Two-part regression models were applied.

Results

Overall, 79.4% of WwMS reported productivity loss, mainly due to presenteeism (76.9%), with mean work impairment of 40.3%. The mean annual cost was €12,580, 83% attributable to presenteeism. Costs were higher in those reporting work difficulties based on MSQ-Job cut-off (€13,992 vs €7,098; $p<0.001$). Lower WRQoL, higher fatigue, and greater healthcare needs were associated with higher productivity losses.

Conclusion

MS-related work difficulties generate substantial indirect costs, largely driven by presenteeism. Vocational rehabilitation Interventions targeting workplace well-being and fatigue, may reduce productivity losses and improve quality of life.

70 Implementation Science Approach to an Interdisciplinary Vocational Rehabilitation Model for Multiple Sclerosis: A CFIR-Informed Evaluation of the RiaL SM Project

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Abstract

Introduction:People with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) frequently experience work-related difficulties that affect quality of life. The RiaL-SM project evaluated an interdisciplinary Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) approach to address needs in the rehabilitative, reasonable accommodation and educational-informative areas.

Materials and Methods:Two surveys, informed by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR), were administered to workers with MS (WwMS) enrolled in RiaL SM and to VR Professionals (VRP) involved in the intervention. The WwMS survey explored clarity, usefulness, flexibility and impact on work functioning of the three intervention areas. The VRP survey investigated perceived utility, compatibility with routine practice, organizational readiness, barriers and training needs.

Results: Twenty-two WwMS (Mean age=48.1±12.1 years 68% full-time work) completed the survey. The VR programme was rated as "quite/very" useful (82%), "quite/very" clear (95%) and "quite/very" able to improve work conditions (83%). Across the three areas, professionals' ability to understand needs and identify appropriate solutions was rated as very strong (80.3%). The solutions identified were considered "quite/very" appropriate to the work situation (41.3%). Eight professionals participated; 100% rated the programme "quite" useful and all were willing to receive further training. Internal communication emerged as a key facilitator and was rated very effective (75%). 63% operators rate human resources insufficient and personnel only partially prepared for implementation (38%)

Conclusions: RiaL SM model is perceived as useful and acceptable, with facilitators such as team communication and programme adaptability. However, challenges emerged, suggesting scale-up requires increased human resources and training

78 Experiential knowledge shapes People-Centred Innovation and strengthens resilience, agency, and life roles in People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) hold experiential knowledge that is essential for shaping innovation that reflects real-life needs, priorities, and daily constraints. This is especially true in rehabilitation, where progress requires personal commitment and consistency. Active participation in research and innovation improves the relevance and usability of solutions while strengthening sense of agency, self-worth, and social role. For many PwMS, this represents a shift from being "patients" to being meaningful contributors, helping reduce negative perceptions of the disease and fostering resilience. Within the EU-funded TEN4CARE project, focused on developing innovations for tendon disorders, PwMS are engaged through co-design activities, needs-mapping, and iterative feedback. Tendon disorders are often an indirect consequence of MS, due to altered movement patterns, muscle imbalance, and compensatory strategies. When tendon injury occurs, immobilisation becomes especially harmful, increasing the risk of accumulating disability. TEN4CARE addresses this challenge by developing a minimally invasive treatment, complemented by targeted training content, that enables prevention, effective rehabilitation pathways, and faster recovery, with the goal of preserving mobility and functional independence. PwMS contribute to identifying needs, advising on feasibility and acceptability, and guiding device features and use cases. Co-designed awareness and training activities support empowerment and promote preventive and functional rehabilitation practices. PwMS facilitate acceptability, act as trusted ambassadors, and contribute to early dialogue with regulators. Engagement generates mutually reinforcing benefits: it enhances research quality and supports a more transparent and inclusive innovation pathway, while strengthening personal agency, self-worth, and social identity.

97 Quality of life (QOL) in an employed population of people with multiple sclerosis and effects of a complex intervention directed at physical functioning, physical activity, work and QOL.

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Abstract

Introduction: QOL is lower for people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) than the general population, impacted by fatigue, cognition, depression, disability and social factors but can improve with tailored care. The aim was to investigate the status of health-related and general dimensions of QOL in an employed MS-population in Norway and effects of CoreDISTparticipation, an intervention directed towards work-barriers, physical activity, function, fatigue, and QOL.

Methods: Assessor-blinded prospective multicenter randomized controlled trial including 115 pwMS (EDSS0-4) randomized to CoreDISTParticipation (n=57) or usual care (n=58). Intervention: 1) Information videos; outpatient physiotherapist-assessment; employment consultant-meeting. 2) group-physiotherapy x2/week, 6 weeks. 3) digitally supported independent training x2/week, 6 weeks. Assessments at baseline, weeks 9 and 16. Descriptives and repeated measures mixed models. Outcomes;EQ5D-index and VAS, Satisfaction with life scale-3 (SWLS-3), generic QOL-questions.

Results: 86 women and 29 men, mean age 46.9 years (SD9.3). Mean baseline scores EQ5D index; 0.819 (SD0.149) and EQ5D VAS; 66.25 (SD16.996), slightly above population norms (index: 0.805 (SD0.201), VAS: 77.9 (SD18.3). SWLS-3: 13.559 (SD 4.208) 16.3% reported high satisfaction with life (>9-10/10), lower than the general population in Norway (21%). Meaning in life was rated at 7.3(1.971), above the population average in Norway (6.7/10).

There were significant group differences in reported feelings of joy (p=0.049,CI:-0.95,-0.00) and for feelings of anxiety (p=0.04,CI:0.01,1.41) favouring the intervention group at 16 weeks. Otherwise, no significant group differences.

Conclusion: Reported QOL at baseline varies when compared to population averages. There were group differences in affective QOL, otherwise no significant differences between groups at any timepoints.

99 “It’s like adding another layer”: Women’s experiences of menopause as a disruptive transition in multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Background: The menopausal transition may influence the wellbeing of women living with multiple sclerosis (MS), yet research in this area is limited. We aimed to gain insight into women’s lived experiences of MS during menopause.

Methods: Four in-person focus group discussions were conducted with women with MS across different stages of the menopausal transition. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke’s framework.

Findings: Twenty women aged 41-67 years participated. Three overarching themes were identified: 1) menopause as an intensifying and destabilising layer, 2) impact on everyday functioning and social roles, and 3) fragmented care and the need for self-advocacy. Participants described menopause as intensifying and overlapping with existing MS-related symptoms, including fatigue, cognitive difficulties, mood changes, pain, and sexual dysfunction, thereby disrupting established balance with MS. This compounded symptom burden affected multiple areas of daily life, including reduced work capacity, withdrawal from employment, participation in social life, and strain in intimate relationships. Healthcare was perceived as fragmented across specialties, with menopausal symptoms often dismissed, minimized, or redirected. In the absence of coordinated support, women assumed responsibility for researching symptom management and actively advocated for interventions, including hormone therapy.

Conclusion: Women experienced menopause as a significant and under-recognised contributor to complexity in living with MS, with implications for daily life as well as physical and psychosocial wellbeing. Greater clinical awareness and improved coordinated care are essential to support women with MS through this transition.

117 Difficulties in coping with temperature changes in people with multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Background

In patients with multiple sclerosis (MS), it is important in clinical practice to distinguish between transient worsening of neurological symptoms caused by an infection or other factors, such as temperature changes. Our goal was to objectively assess the frequency of symptoms caused by temperature changes and to investigate strategies for managing them.

Methods

A survey was created to assess these difficulties (distributed online through patient organizations).

Results

A total of 724 people with MS (82 % women) participated in the questionnaire survey, representing a range of neurological deficits and disease duration. A total of 75 % of participants reported experiencing worsening symptoms due to temperature changes, 14 % were unsure, and only 11 % did not experience worsening symptoms due to temperature changes. The vast majority have difficulty coping with heat (58.7 %), followed by both heat and cold (37.6 %), and only 3.7 % with cold. The most common symptoms worsened by heat are fatigue (83 %), muscle weakness (50 %), and walking difficulties (49 %). Worsening of symptoms is most often caused by hot weather (87 %), changes in weather (40 %), and hot baths (30 %). To cope with difficulties in the heat, patients most often choose light, breathable clothing (63 %) and limit their activities (63 %). A total of 76 % of respondents would welcome more information on how to manage these difficulties.

Conclusion

Sensitivity to temperature is very common and it is important to provide patients with information on appropriate lifestyle adjustments and assistive devices as part of their rehabilitation.

119 Beyond symptom management – What people with MS value in physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

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Abstract

Objective:

Multiple sclerosis (MS) challenges daily functioning, independence and participation. Physiotherapy and occupational therapy are regarded essential elements in MS management, yet the perspectives and values of people with MS (PwMS) regarding these therapies across the disease course are underexplored.

Methods:

We combined a nationwide online survey (n=193) with in-depth interviews (n=23) to capture use, experiences, values, satisfaction and barriers related to physiotherapy and occupational therapy among Dutch PwMS. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively; qualitative data thematically (survey) and with interpretative phenomenological analysis (interviews).

Results:

Physiotherapy was widely known and used (97% ever used, 88% current use); occupational therapy was known by 96% and used by 75% (25% current). PwMS highly value both therapies throughout all disease stages, not only for maintaining mobility and independence, but also for fostering self-determination in living with MS. Patient values evolved dynamically with disease progression and life circumstances. Five key themes emerged: values related to the patient, therapist, patient-therapist relationship, therapy content, and interprofessional collaboration. Satisfaction was high, especially regarding trust, contact and involvement in therapy decisions. Barriers included distance, mobility, transport and financial issues. PwMS emphasize the need for MS-specific expertise, truly personalized adaptive care, integrated multidisciplinary collaboration and reducing practical and financial barriers.

Conclusion:

PwMS highly value physiotherapy and occupational therapy across all disease stages. Their needs and expectations are dynamic and multifaceted, underscoring the importance of personalized, accessible and MS-specific allied healthcare. Adapting therapy to the evolving values and needs of PwMS is crucial for empowering autonomy and quality of life.

123 Prevalence of pelvic floor dysfunction and interest in rehabilitation

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Abstract

Background

Bladder and bowel problems are among the typical symptoms of multiple sclerosis. Our goal was to investigate the prevalence of bladder and bowel incontinence and sexual difficulties among people with MS who have varying degrees of neurological disability.

Methods

We used a questionnaire survey that combined the standardized ICIQ, Overactive Bladder Questionnaire, MS Intimacy Scale, and Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, the Fatigue Severity Scale, and our own questionnaire in group of 308 people with MS (84 % women).

Results

Mean age of respondents was 46,3 years (SD 11,4) with disease duration from 0 to 49 years (mean 14,2 SD 10,2) and mean PDDS 2,5 (SD 1,9, range 0-8). Total of 67 % complain of urinary incontinence, 25 % complain of fecal incontinence, and 58 % complain of sexual difficulties. It is shocking that 25 % of respondents report that their treating neurologist never asks them about these symptoms. 43 % use some form of incontinence aids and more than 66v% would be interested in specialized rehabilitation (they expressed the most interest in video-based exercises or individual physiotherapy).

Conclusion

Given the prevalence of these difficulties, it is advisable to provide targeted education on assistive devices and offer tailored exercises based on their preferences (individually or in the form of telerehabilitation).

125 The NBD-MS instrument – a new tool to assess neurogenic bowel dysfunction and its invisible burden, in people with Multiple Sclerosis.

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Abstract

Background:

About two-thirds of people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS) are believed to suffer from bowel symptoms such as constipation and faecal incontinence. Existing questionnaires fail to exhaust the symptoms pwMS experience, including the life-altering burden and changes which may ensue from managing bowel symptoms. Therefore, the authors sought to develop a new tool, specifically designed to help assess bowel symptoms and their impact in pwMS.

Methods:

A 12-item questionnaire on bowel symptoms and their repercussions, specifically developed for pwMS through multinational patient interviews and international Delphi processes, was promoted and distributed to Danish pwMS. Short questions on background information, gastrointestinal comorbidities and quality of life (QoL) were also included. The association between questions and quality of life was calculated with logistic regression analysis, where only questions significantly correlated with QoL were included, and points were assigned to each response category equivalent to the odds ratio.

Results:

588 patients responded.

One question was excluded. Calculations resulted in two separate scores.

The Burden Score, consisting of 6 questions: satisfaction with current bowel regime, abdominal discomfort, worries, altering activities, oral and rectal medications. *The Symptom Score,* consisting of 5 questions: frequency of defecation, sensation of incomplete emptying, duration of defecation, faecal incontinence, and urge.

Conclusion:

Authors have developed a completely new tool, the *NBD-MS instrument*, consisting of a *Burden score* and a *Symptom score,* for assessing bowel symptoms and their burden in pwMS.

127 PM&R-Led Multidisciplinary Coordination: Implementing an ICF Based Model to Optimize Rehabilitation Pathways in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction: Multiple sclerosis (MS) requires comprehensive, continuous care to address evolving functional deficits. Standard community services often result in fragmented care. A coordinated multidisciplinary approach is essential to align rehabilitation intensity with patient specific needs and ensure clinical continuity.

Objectives: To evaluate the efficacy of a newly established, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) -coordinated multidisciplinary MS Rehabilitation center, focusing on pathway adherence, and the transition from episodic assessment to longitudinal care.

Methods: A retrospective analysis was conducted on 29 MS patients (58.6 % female, mean age 50.2 ±12.4 years, median EDSS 6.0) evaluated at our multidisciplinary clinics. Patients were stratified into tailored pathways: inpatient, day-hospital, targeted outpatient, or home rehabilitation. Primary outcomes included pathway adherence and completion rates. Additionally, a novel PM&R specialist clinic for functional monitoring was implemented.

Results: ICF-guided precision routing of patients with moderate to severe disability resulted in precision routing: 48.3% to day-hospital, 20.7% to inpatient, 20.7% to outpatient, and 10.3% to home based rehabilitation. Adherence rates were exceptionally high; 85.7% adhered to the day hospital and 83.3% for inpatient programs. To sustain functional gains, a dedicated PM&R follow-up clinic was launched, successfully conducting 3 clinical sessions to date.

Conclusions: Early data confirm that an ICF-based, PM&R-led stratification model successfully matches MS patients to the correct rehabilitation intensity, yielding high adherence even in population with advanced disability. Integrating a dedicated PM&R specialist clinic is a critical step in evolving from episodic to a continuum of care, directly addressing the progressive nature of MS.

129 Defining individual nursing objectives with MS patients in an interdisciplinary and shared decision-making rehabilitation setting

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Abstract

Background
Patient-centered goal setting is widely implemented in MS rehabilitation, but remains challenging to apply in nursing practice. There is an important necessity to structure and translate patients' expectations into individualized objectives and action plans.

PurposeTo describe a framework for patient-tailored nursing goal-setting in an interdisciplinary MS-rehabilitation centre.

MethodsPrior to admission, patients are invited to express expectations via an online questionnaire. Upon admission, a nurse is assigned to each patient and acts as counselor and the main contact within the nursing team throughout the rehabilitation. Nursing objectives are developed through a four-step approach. First, the designated nurse conducts an intake to evaluate patients' expectations. Secondly, functional skills and limitations, as well as health literacy are assessed. Next, patient-centered objectives are determined using SMART-criteria. Finally, nursing objectives are refined together with the patient and operationalized into a care plan. In an interdisciplinary team meeting, treatment goals are discussed and prioritized, including the patient as an equal team member. Regular follow-up by the designated nurse ensures monitoring and adjustment of the care plan.

Anticipated resultsImplementation of this goal-orientated framework seems feasible and may enhance motivation, engagement, autonomy, shared decision making, ownership of care, increase knowledge and could improve interdisciplinary alignment.

ConclusionThis approach seems valuable in MS nursing rehabilitation, although research on this topic is mandatory to provide evidence-based nursing. Defining nursing objectives within an interdisciplinary setting may reinforce the crucial role of nurses in improving quality of care and life for MS patients in complex rehabilitation pathways.

151 Anorectal Dysfunction in Multiple Sclerosis: Individualized Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Perspectives

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Abstract

Background: Anorectal dysfunction is a frequent but underrecognized manifestation of multiple sclerosis (MS), including fecal incontinence, constipation, impaired rectal sensation, and evacuation disorders. These symptoms substantially impair quality of life, social participation, and autonomy, yet MS-specific therapeutic evidence remains limited.

Methods: We present our clinical and research experience with individualized rehabilitation in MS patients with anorectal dysfunction, placed within the current therapeutic landscape. In our pilot study, patients completed a 6-month biofeedback-based rehabilitation programme. Outcomes were assessed using high-resolution anorectal manometry and the St. Mark's Fecal Incontinence Score at baseline, after supervised physiotherapy, and following a period of self-management.

Results: Individualized rehabilitation was associated with improvement in symptom severity according to the St. Mark's score, whereas manometric parameters did not demonstrate statistically significant change. These findings suggest that clinically meaningful patient-reported benefit may occur despite the absence of measurable normalization of anorectal physiology. Current evidence supports a stepwise approach including bowel routine optimization, dietary and fluid measures, toileting education, pharmacological support, and pelvic floor rehabilitation with biofeedback. In refractory cases, advanced strategies such as transanal irrigation or neuromodulation may be considered.

Conclusions: Individualized rehabilitation appears to represent a clinically relevant component of comprehensive care for anorectal dysfunction in MS. Further controlled MS-specific studies are needed to define treatment algorithms and predictors of response.

Psychosocial and Cognitive Rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis and related disorders

This chapter explores recent advances in psychosocial and cognitive rehabilitation in multiple sclerosis (MS), moving beyond symptom-focused approaches toward integrated models that combine recovery, compensatory strategies, and real-world participation, using both technological and traditional tools. Abstracts address the development of normative data for digital cognitive screening to support routine clinical practice, alongside the feasibility of vocational rehabilitation interventions aimed at enhancing work participation and daily functioning. Critical perspectives on diversity and inclusivity in neuropsychological rehabilitation research are discussed, highlighting gaps in representation and their implications for equitable care. Overall, this chapter offers a multidimensional view of rehabilitation for "invisible" symptoms, bridging methodological innovation, clinical application, and a strong focus on participation and inclusion.

9 Representation matters: A review of the current state of diversity and inclusivity within multiple sclerosis clinical trials of neuropsychological rehabilitation

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Abstract

Multiple sclerosis (MS) affects individuals across diverse demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, yet it is unclear whether neuropsychological rehabilitation trials adequately reflect this diversity. A systematic review was conducted to assess the state of representation and diversity in MS neurorehabilitation clinical trials.

The following databases were searched: SCOPUS, PubMed, Cochrane Library, PsycINFO, ProQuest, ISRCTN and clinicaltrials.gov. Randomised Controlled Trials published between 2015 and 2025 were included. Data were extracted using a bespoke extraction form that captured demographic reporting, eligibility criteria, recruitment pathways, and patient and public involvement (PPI) within the trials.

Across 118 RCTs, only 14 (11.86%) reported participants' ethnicities. Eligibility criteria commonly excluded individuals who did not complete foundational schooling, had limited language proficiency, multimorbidity, higher disability levels, or severe cognitive impairment. Recruitment strategies were largely clinic-based and seldom designed to reach underserved groups; 20 (16.94%) studies used community recruitment. PPI involvement was reported in 17 (14.40 %) publications, indicating a limited involvement of people with MS in shaping research design or delivery.

These findings suggest that key demographic and clinical groups are underrepresented and/or not reported in neuropsychological rehabilitation trials. This risks reinforcing structural inequities in term of who is able to participate and benefit. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing interventions that are equitable, accessible, and relevant to the full diversity of people living with MS.

16 Beyond Balance: The Role of Body Trust in Fear of Falling in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction

Fear of falling (FoF) is common in people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) and is often attributed to impaired balance. However, the role of interoceptive awareness, how individuals perceive and interpret bodily signals, remains unclear. This study examined the associations between interoceptive awareness, objective balance, and FoF in MS.

Methods

Seventy-seven pwMS [mean age=43.8 years (SD=11.2); 58 females, mean PDDS score=2.4 (SD=1.9)] participated in this study. FoF was assessed using the Falls Efficacy Scale-International (FES-I). Interoceptive body awareness was evaluated by the Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA), including its eight subscales. Objective balance performance was measured using the Mini-Balance Evaluation Systems Test (MiniBESTest).

Results

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong negative association between MiniBEST and FES-I score ($r=-0.70$, $p<0.001$), indicating that poorer balance was associated with higher FoF. Among the MAIA subscales, only the Trusting subscale was significantly associated with FoF ($r=-0.34$, $p=0.002$), with lower body trust linked to higher fear.

A multiple linear regression model including all MAIA subscales and MiniBEST scores was performed to assess independence from objective balance. The overall model was significant ($R^2=0.58$, $p<0.001$), with both MiniBEST ($\beta=-0.95$, $p<0.001$) and Trusting ($\beta=-2.61$, $p=0.015$) independently associated with FoF. The interaction term between Trusting and MiniBEST was not significant ($p=0.733$), indicating that these factors contribute independently to FoF.

Conclusions

FoF in pwMS is associated not only with impaired balance but also with reduced body trust. These factors contribute independently, suggesting that addressing interoceptive processes, in addition to balance rehabilitation, may help reduce FoF.

18 Assessing unmet social needs in multiple sclerosis care in Australia: a qualitative assessment of feasibility, barriers and enablers.

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Abstract

Background: Unmet social needs (including housing, transport, social inclusion) contribute substantially to health outcomes, especially for people with long-term health conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS). Whether assessment of unmet social needs occurs in MS clinical care is unclear. This study aims to 1) understand current practices, 2) identify barriers and enablers to social needs assessments, and 3) explore the feasibility of social needs screening tools, in MS care.

Methods: This qualitative descriptive study comprised focus groups and interviews with clinicians, carers and people with MS in Australia. We inductively and deductively coded transcripts and used applied thematic analysis to identify themes, using COM-B (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, Behaviour) and Feasibility frameworks.

Results: Participants (11 clinicians and 8 lived-experience participants) reported inconsistent and unstructured social needs assessment in MS care. Barriers aligned with capability (lack of referral pathway knowledge), opportunity (resources) and motivation (belief in abilities, evidence of value, consumer scepticism). Enablers aligned with capability (clinician rapport, consumer self-advocacy), opportunity (care coordination, self-paced assessment), and motivation (mutual desire for positive patient outcomes). A social needs screening tool was considered acceptable, conditional on adequate resourcing and/or design to ensure identified needs can be addressed.

Conclusion: Findings suggest that the current integration of social care in MS healthcare in Australia is inadequate. We identified opportunities to develop and test a screening tool and supporting referral resources to identify and address unmet social needs in MS patients. Better integrated social and healthcare represents a promising avenue for improving comprehensive MS management.

25 Developing UK normative data for two online cognitive screening tasks to support routine neuropsychological screening in Multiple Sclerosis clinics

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Abstract

Cognitive difficulties affect up to 70% of people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and are associated with reduced daily functioning and lower quality of life. To support early routine identification, the NEuRoMS programme has developed two online cognitive screening tasks: Symbol Substitution Task (SST) and Word Colour Task (WCT). This study aimed to generate UK-based normative data and cognitive impairment thresholds for both tasks.

A cross-sectional online study recruited 431 SST (mean age 41.6, *SD*=14.32) and 432 WCT (mean age 40.25, *SD*=13.89) adults *without* an MS diagnosis completing the tasks remotely on mobile devices. Descriptive statistics and *SD*-based impairment thresholds were calculated. Multiple linear regression examined demographic predictors, and regression-based norms were generated.

Age significantly predicted performance on both tasks (SST coefficient=-0.39, $p<.001$; WCT coefficient=-0.36, $p<.001$), with scores decreasing as age increased. Education predicted SST performance (coefficient =2.40, $p=.017$), and gender predicted WCT performance (coefficient=-3.88, $p=.003$), with higher scores in women and those with degree-level education or higher. Raw impairment thresholds were established, and two regression-based norming approaches developed: age-categorical lookup tables and age-continuous equations for automated adjusted norms.

These UK-based norms provide population-specific reference values for these online tests and support more nuanced interpretation of cognitive screening results within MS clinics.

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33 Vocational Rehabilitation for workers with MS in the Italian context: feasibility and explorative results

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Abstract

Introduction: Job retention is a key health outcome for workers with MS (WwMS). Vocational rehabilitation (VR) provides targeted interventions to support WwMS in overcoming work difficulties. However, evidence regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of VR for WwMS is poor.

Method: We conducted a VR feasibility study involving 30 participants with a confirmed diagnosis of MS who experienced work-related difficulties (MSQ-JOB > 15.8). VR involved the implementation of rehabilitation programmes to manage symptoms at work, an assessment of reasonable accommodations (RA), and educational programmes to raise WwMS' rights awareness. VR were implemented based on individual needs, identified during an initial interview. Each participant was eligible to receive one or more of these three intervention programmes.

Results: The 30 WwMS reported the following characteristics: age Mean (SD): 48.1 (12.1) years; female/male: 19/11; disease course RR/PP/SP: 21/2/7; disease duration Mean (SD): 14.7 (11.2) years; EDSS Mean (SD): 4.8 (2.0). The programme with the highest uptake was education (90%), followed by rehabilitation (87%) and RA (73%). Eighteen (60%) individuals required inter-professional support, involving all three areas, while 9 (30%) activated two intervention areas and 3 (10%) required only one intervention. Adherence to each VR programme was: 89% for rehabilitation, 78% for educational and 55% for RA. The majority (68%) of WwMS perceived an improvement in working conditions, as measured by the Global Perceived Effect (GPE).

Conclusions: Despite its complexity, the VR programme has been feasible with high adherence to the rehabilitation and educational programmes, and can improve perceived working conditions.

42 Don't be late! Qualitative process evaluation of a preventative work coaching intervention for people with multiple sclerosis

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) often leads to premature work disability. This study describes the experiences of employed people with MS who underwent a preventative work intervention within the Don't be late! study.

Method: The intervention consisted of four months of 1-on-1 coaching by an expert-by-experience MS coach. Semi-structured interviews (N=13) and a focus group (N=6) were conducted to capture participants' experiences with the work intervention and to identify implications for future implementation. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: Thematic analysis of the interviews identified four relevant themes: expectations, engagement with the intervention, experiences with the intervention, and recommendations for implementation. The focus group reflected on these themes and the underlying intervention principles. Most participants were unsure what to expect from the intervention. Identifying a work-related challenge sometimes proved difficult because participants did not yet have a concrete support need. Participants who did identify a work-related challenge experienced the intervention as valuable. The lived experience expertise of the MS coaches gave participants a sense of recognition and validation. The personal and flexible approach was appreciated. Although employer involvement was an intervention component, this often did not occur because good work arrangements were already in place, the diagnosis had not been disclosed, or participants were self-employed.

Conclusion: Coaches with lived experience can play a valuable role in work-focused interventions for people with MS. Identifying a challenge and tailored support also prove to be important. Further research is needed into the optimal moment of delivery and the involvement of the employer.

43 CALM – Creating Awareness and Lasting Management of Overstimulation in people with multiple sclerosis and functional neurological disorder

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Abstract

Many people with multiple sclerosis (MS) or a functional neurological disorder (FND) experience overstimulation, which limits daily functioning and lowers quality of life. MS and FND differ in etiology: MS involves structural damage, whereas FND involves disrupted brain functioning without damage. Their complementarity will help us better understand and treat people with various brain disorders suffering from overstimulation. Recognition of overstimulation is difficult. People use the term differently, and existing Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) may not adequately capture what is meant when people refer to overstimulation. Moreover, no evidence-based treatment exists.

With the CALM study we aim (1) to determine how people describe overstimulation and test whether existing PROMs align with lived experience through analysis of online posts, psychometric validation, and interviews; (2) to study relations between overstimulation, cognitive and psychological symptoms, fatigue and brain functioning using PROMs, neuropsychological assessments and fMRI, helping us identify overstimulation profiles; (3) to develop and evaluate e-CALM, an innovative blended e-health intervention designed to enhance personal and functional recovery. e-CALM first provides education and strategies to lower the threshold for exposure to external stimuli, followed by graded exposure therapy (first in VR, then in daily life). Feasibility and acceptability will be tested in a pilot. Then, we will conduct a randomized controlled trial comparing e- CALM to enhanced standard care. Finally, we will examine whether overstimulation profiles predict treatment response.

The CALM study will advance our understanding and recognition of overstimulation and deliver an innovative, widely applicable treatment, tailored to those who benefit most.

48 Home-Based Serious Games to Improve Cognition in Multiple Sclerosis: A Randomized Trial

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Abstract

Cognitive impairment affects up to 65% of persons with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS), with prominent deficits in information processing speed and memory. While conventional cognitive rehabilitation has demonstrated efficacy, innovative and accessible approaches such as serious game therapy (SGT) may enhance engagement and treatment outcomes.

To describe the protocol of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluating the clinical efficacy of a tablet-based, home-delivered cognitive rehabilitation program using SGT compared with standard neuropsychological rehabilitation in pwMS.

This study is a double-blind, parallel-group RCT including 150 ambulatory pwMS randomly assigned (1:1) to either (1) tablet-based SGT or (2) conventional cognitive exercises. Both interventions will be delivered over 4 months, with four 20-minute sessions per week. Cognitive outcomes will be assessed by a blinded evaluator at baseline (T0), post-intervention (T1), and 6-month follow-up (T2). The primary endpoint will be cognitive performance measured using the Brief International Cognitive Assessment for Multiple Sclerosis (BICAMS), focusing on information processing speed and episodic memory.

It is hypothesized that the SGT intervention will lead to greater improvements in processing speed and episodic memory compared with conventional rehabilitation, reflecting enhanced learning engagement and training intensity.

This trial will provide clinically relevant evidence on the effectiveness of an accessible, home-based digital intervention for cognitive rehabilitation in MS. If effective, SGT could represent a scalable and patient-centered approach to improving cognitive outcomes and long-term functional independence in pwMS.

68 Understanding Work-Related Difficulties in People with Multiple Sclerosis: A Person-Centered Approach

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Abstract

Introduction

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) onset typically occurs during the most productive years of adult life causing reduction or loss of employment, which may occur even in the early stages of the disease. The study aims to describe the work-related difficulties among workers with MS (WwMS) using a person-centered approach.

Materials and Methods

Thirty workers with a confirmed diagnosis of MS and reporting work-related difficulties (MSQ-Job score >15.8) were included. Socio-demographic and clinical data were collected. Work-related difficulties were identified using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM), a semi-structured interview that allows the identification of up to five problematic activities in which the individual wishes to improve performance and satisfaction.

Results

The 30 WwMS [age M(SD): 48.1 (12.1) years; female/male: 19/11; disease course RR/PP/SP: 21/2/7; disease duration M(SD): 14.7 (11.2) years; EDSS M(SD): 4.8 (2.0)] reported a total of 107 work-related difficulties, with a M(SD) of 3.6 (1.0) difficulties per person.

The most reported difficulties concerned the management of symptoms (26%,n=28), environmental factors and workplace accessibility (23%, n=25), psychological and relational domain (15%, n=16), organizational and management aspects (15%, n=16). Less frequently reported were difficulties related to limited disease knowledge and stigma (9%, n=10), commuting to the workplace (6%, n=6), and limited knowledge of workers' rights (6%, n=6).

Conclusions

The results highlight that WwMS experience a wide range of work-related difficulties, mainly related to symptom management and physical accessibility of the workplace. Psychological, relational, and organizational challenges are also present, although less frequently reported.

69 READY FOR MS (MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS): DEVELOPMENT, FEASIBILITY TRIAL AND PILOT STUDY OF AN ACT-BASED ONLINE INTERVENTION FOR PATIENTS WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

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Abstract

The unpredictable nature of MS exacerbates psychological distress and negatively impacts quality of life. Although many people with MS (pwMS) experience psychological distress up to relevant psychiatric comorbidities, there is a lack of psychotherapeutic offers. In addition, only few therapeutic interventions target resilience. As resilience, the ability to “bounce back” from adversity, is a key factor in coping with chronic diseases, we developed and feasibility-tested an adapted German online version of the group-based resilience-enhancing program READY for MS.

The program was set-up with an 8-module application with an additional booster session, which included videos, exercises, a personal plan and a workbook. In a single-arm feasibility study with n=19 pwMS (age: 39.11 years, standard deviation (SD) = 12.91; sex: 79% female) we collected data to assess program usability, perceived personal experiences and benefits, impressions and suggestions for improvement by post-intervention surveys. With a structured qualitative interview in a subset n=5 participants we collected additional data to measure satisfaction with the program and to get more information regarding usability and applicability in depth.

The program was well accepted, and both qualitative and quantitative findings indicated high satisfaction and perceived benefit. Participants reported greater self-reflection, awareness, and stress-resistance, and suggested minor structural and technological improvements. Quantitative results (n=19) indicated positive effects of the program on resilience (CD-RISC p=.039), quality of life (HAQUAMS p=.019), and psychological flexibility (MPFI flexibility p<.001; inflexibility p=.024)

The German online version of READY for MS appears to be a feasible and well-accepted intervention to support resilience in PwMS.

71 Body Image, Interoceptive Awareness and Psychological Factors in People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Multiple sclerosis (MS) symptoms such as sensorimotor, cognitive and mood disorders may be linked to changes in body image (BI), the subjective representation that each person has of their body, that is fundamental for awareness, development, and maintenance of individual psychological identity. This study aims to examine the relationship between BI, interoceptive awareness, psychological and neuropsychological factors in people with MS (PwMS).

Participants completed an online questionnaire collecting socio-demographic (age, gender, education) and clinical data (e.g., self-reported EDSS, disease duration). Self-report measures assessing interoceptive awareness (MAIA), health status (SF-12), perceived cognitive deficits (MSNQ) and body image (modified Body Image Scale, mBIS).

The final sample included 208 PwMS (N female: 144; age 50.9±14.6 years; disease duration 14.7±11.1 years; self-EDSS 4.0±1.96). Spearman correlations showed that mBIS was mildly correlated with different MAIA sub-scales: Noticing ($\rho=0.274; p < .001$), Not-Worrying ($\rho=-0.314; p < .001$), Attention Regulation ($\rho=-0.188; p < .001$), Self-Regulation ($\rho=-0.297; p < .001$), and moderately correlated with Trusting ($\rho=-0.530; p < .001$). mBIS was also moderately correlated with SF-12 ($\rho=-0.665; p < .001$) and with MSNQ ($\rho=0.447; p < .001$).

These findings suggest that in PwMS BI distress is linked to all the MAIA-subscores: bodily awareness, anxiety and worry, difficulties in attention and emotion regulation and reduced trust in the body. BI distress was further associated with poorer perceived health-related quality of life and greater perceived cognitive deficit. Overall, the results suggest that interventions promoting adaptive bodily awareness and regulation may support psychological well-being in this population.

73 Living with Advanced Multiple Sclerosis: A Qualitative Study of Psychosocial Challenges

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Abstract

Introduction: A substantial number of People with MS (PwMS) reach an advanced stage characterized by severe impairments and a need of daily assistance. This study explored central psychosocial consequences of living with advanced MS from the perspectives of PwMS and their close relatives.

Methods: Seventeen individual in-depth interviews with PwMS were supplemented by individual and group interviews with nine close relatives. Data were analysed thematically.

Results: Three interconnected themes captured central psychosocial challenges. First, both PwMS and relatives described *loss of autonomy and identity.* As daily life became dominated by care schedules, physical limitations and dependency, PwMS described losing autonomy and personal identity. Relatives experienced parallel losses as care responsibilities permeated their daily lives, affecting their independence and life roles. Second, *reduced social participation* was pervasive. Mobility limitations, fatigue and lack of accessibility hindered PwMS' involvement in social and meaningful activities and participation required extensive planning. Relatives often withdrew from their own social engagements to maintain caregiving and support. Several participants described losing social connections as the disease progressed. Third, *emotional strain and uncertainty about the future* were prominent. Participants expressed sadness, frustration and worry about further decline and how it might affect living situations, relationships and their ability to cope.

Conclusions: The study illustrates how advanced MS affects psychosocial wellbeing for PwMS and relatives. The findings highlight the importance of rehabilitation practices that integrate both physical and psychosocial perspectives, ensuring that both PwMS and relatives receive support aligned with the complexities of everyday life with advanced MS.

79 Sex differences in coping strategies among caregivers of people with multiple sclerosis: a cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Background: Data on sex differences in coping across caregivers of people with chronic conditions are inconsistent. Females favor emotion-focused while males problem-focused strategies, though studies show convergence. Evidence for caregivers of people with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) is limited.

Objective: To examine sex differences in coping strategies among family caregivers of PwMS.

Methods: Eligibility required caring for PwMS not fully independent. 200 caregivers (51% male; mean age 58.7) completed the COPE-NVI-25, with standardized subscale scores. Sex differences were analyzed using chi-square or Fisher's exact tests for categorical variables, and nonparametric tests for continuous variables.

Results: Male caregivers were older (60.5±12.7vs56.7±12.4 years, p=0.009), more frequently married/cohabiting (90.2%vs79.6%, p=0.048), and partners of the care recipient (80.4%vs58.2%, p=0.006). No differences emerged in education, employment, geography, caregiving years or hours per day. Females reported higher religious coping (2.31±1.17vs1.89±1.02, p=0.006) and social support (2.11±0.63vs1.89±0.52, p=0.015). Problem-focused and positive-attitude strategies were most used and comparable across sexes; denial was least used, with no significant differences.

Conclusions: Caregivers of PwMS show convergent coping, differing only in religious coping and social support. Convergence on problem-focused strategies aligns with the progressive trajectory of MS. Greater female religious coping may reflect a strategy for managing distress. Male caregivers, predominantly spouses, report lower social support, possibly because their primary source of support is the care recipient. Despite accounting for sex, these findings reveal a pattern consistent with gender norms in coping strategies.

Disclosure: Nothing to disclose.

82 REMOTE-MS: Synchronous Cognitive Telerehabilitation for People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction: The REMOTE-MS project evaluates the non-inferiority of synchronous cognitive telerehabilitation compared to traditional in-person treatment for people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), aiming to improve access and continuity of care.

Materials and Methods: PwMS from AISM Rehabilitation Services of Liguria (Genoa) and Como were randomized into an experimental group (EXP, telerehabilitation) or a control group (CTRL, in-person). Both groups performed cognitive exercises via the *MedicoAmico Pro* app for 16 sessions over 8 weeks. EXP participants used tablets for remote connection with a neuropsychologist, while CTRL participants received on-site care. Assessments were conducted at baseline (T0), post-intervention (T1), and 8-week follow-up (T2). The primary outcome was the SDMT; secondary outcomes included BVMTR, CVLT2, and usability (SUS/CSQ-8).

Results: To date, 33 participants have completed the intervention (mean age 54.6; EDSS 4.55). SDMT scores improved more than 4 points in both groups (T0: 40.84; T1: 44.24). A significant improvement over time was found for visuospatial memory (BVMTR, $p < 0.05$). No significant differences were observed for other secondary outcomes. Usability (SUS) was excellent in both groups (EXP: 82.26; CTRL: 82.92), and satisfaction (CSQ-8) was high (28.69).

Conclusions: Preliminary findings indicate improvements in processing speed and visuospatial memory across both settings, with excellent usability. If non-inferiority is confirmed in the full sample (N=130), telerehabilitation could significantly reduce economic and environmental impacts while ensuring equitable access to care.

85 Unraveling Exercise Response to Fatigue in People with Multiple Sclerosis – who benefits and why? Secondary analysis from the MSBOOST trial.

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Abstract

Introduction: Fatigue is a common and debilitating symptom in people with multiple sclerosis (PWMS). While pharmacological treatments provide limited relief, exercise has shown promising benefits. However, it remains unclear whether fatigued and non-clinically fatigued PWMS respond differently to the same exercise intervention, and whether baseline characteristics differ between responders and non-responders.

Objective: To compare responses to a standardised exercise intervention (aerobic and resistance training) in fatigued versus non-clinically fatigued PWMS and identify baseline characteristics of responders and non-responders.

Methods: A total of 150 PWMS (45±8 years; EDSS 2.7±1.6; 73% women) were randomised to 12 weeks of aerobic training (AT, n=60), resistance training (RT, n=60), or usual care (n=30). Fatigue status was defined using a cut-off of 38 points on the Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS). Responders were those exceeding the minimally important difference of 3.84 points after intervention.

Results: Exercise (AT and RT combined) reduced $MFIS_{total}$ compared to control (-8.3 [--16.0;-1.1]; a comparable response was observed following AT (-8.3 [-17.6;0.9]) and RT (-5.6 [-14.9;0.3])). Fatigued PWMS showed greater reductions in $MFIS_{total}$ (-6.0 [-10.8;-1.1]) and $MFIS_{cognitive}$ (-3.2 [-5.6;-0.8]) than non- clinically fatigued PWMS, while changes in $MFIS_{physical}$ were borderline (-2.2 [-4.8;0.3]). Responders had higher baseline $MFIS_{total}$ (11.0 [4.1;17.9]) and longer disease duration (5.6 [2.2;8.8] years) than non-responders, with no other differences observed.

Conclusion: Both AT and RT reduce fatigue in PWMS. Greater benefits were observed in fatigued individuals, and responders exhibited higher baseline fatigue and longer disease duration. These findings highlight the importance of exercise interventions targeting fatigued PWMS.

89 A new way to communicate with the disease - the role of personification in emotional and functional aspects in MS: A longitudinal point of view.

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Abstract

Objective: Illness personification theory posits that individuals suffering from chronic illness ascribe human characteristics to their illness, which impacts their adaptation. Whereas negative or malevolent personification of chronic illness derails adaptation, positive or benevolent personification yields a complex pattern with aspects of adaptation. This study aimed to examine, for the first time, the role of personification of MS, and compared it with Psoriasis (Ps).

Method: Study 1. A two-wave design was implemented with 250 people with MS. The illness Personification Scale was administered alongside a host of adaptation-related variables relating to salutogenic, psychological, psychopathological, and health aspects. Study 2. Two cohorts of MS and Psoriasis (Ps) were evaluated with personification and mental distress indicators, as well as the body image scale.

Results: Study 1 replicated the structure of personification, with good test-retest reliability (for negative (ICC = 0.81; p<.001) as well as for positive personification (ICC = 0.76; p < .001). Negative personification was associated with psychological and psychopathological aspects, while positive personification was associated with salutogenic adaptation. Study 2 found that latent depression/anxiety was higher in Ps than in MS (b = 3.89; b = 2.27). The serial mediation model explored an indirect effect from Illness type to body perception to negative illness personification, culminating in latent depression/anxiety.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that negative personification may be a risk factor for adaptation in MS, highlighting the need for a more in-depth exploration of the implications of positive personification. Additionally, the disease's visibility appears to influence this dynamic.

90 Wartime stress and relapse risk in people with multiple sclerosis: a prospective cohort study

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Abstract

Introduction. Psychological stress has been proposed as a trigger for disease activity in multiple sclerosis (MS), but findings have been inconsistent. While prior research has focused largely on chronic stressors, little is known about how people with MS (pwMS) cope with acute, large-scale stress events such as war.

Objective. Examine the effects of wartime stress following the October 7, 2023, attack on disease activity in pwMS, and assess whether emotional factors are associated with relapse risk during this period. Methods. Clinical data on relapses and disability progression were collected retrospectively for the year preceding October 7, 2023, and prospectively for the year following that date. Participants completed standardized questionnaires assessing stress, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and coping flexibility between April and June 2024.

Results. From the 145 pwMS included in the prospective study, 38% experienced at least one relapse in the post-war year, compared to 23% in the year prior. Perceived fatigue was significantly higher among those who experienced relapses, while anxiety, depression, and perceived stress were not significantly associated with relapse frequency. Coping flexibility did not moderate the relationship between psychological distress and relapse count. No significant difference in disability progression was observed between the two time periods.

Conclusions. Wartime conditions were associated with increased relapse activity in pwMS. Fatigue may serve as a sensitive marker of disease vulnerability during stress. Coping flexibility, as measured in this study, did not appear to buffer the effects of psychological distress on relapse risk.

108 Exploring the cognitive care provision of the multiple sclerosis population attending a single- centre multiple sclerosis Unit in Ireland across a ten-year time period.

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Abstract

Cognitive impairment affects up to 70% of people with multiple sclerosis (MS), and international guidelines recommend baseline cognitive screening, regular review, and access to specialist occupational therapy. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of introducing an occupational therapy service on the provision of cognitive care within a single neurorehabilitation service in Ireland. A pre–post study design was used, examining cognitive care practices at two time points. A data collection tool captured demographic and cognitive data from a random sample of 140 people with MS. Time 1 represented current cognitive care (2022; n=70), while Time 2 represented care prior to the introduction of the occupational therapy service (2012; n=70). Data were analysed to compare cognitive screening, identification of cognitive needs, and related clinical practices across the two periods.

Cognitive care provision increased markedly following the introduction of the occupational therapy service. Cognitive screening rates rose substantially in 2022, with 15 individuals referred specifically for cognitive concerns and a further 48 identified opportunistically during sessions for other reasons, indicating a shift toward routine cognitive enquiry. The sharp rise in identified cognitive deficits suggests improved detection and greater clinical attention to cognition. Notably, despite increased documentation of cognitive needs, a higher proportion of individuals were driving in 2022, suggesting that enhanced cognitive assessment and support may help maintain participation in instrumental daily activities, including driving. Overall, the findings indicate that occupational therapy played a central role in expanding cognitive care and improving the identification of cognitive impairment among people with MS.

116 An Occupational Therapy Group Intervention to Address Sleep Disturbances in Individuals with MS

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Abstract

Sleep disturbances affect up to 60–80% of individuals with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and are closely linked to fatigue, decreased daily functioning, and reduced quality of life. However, structured sleep-focused interventions within occupational therapy remain scarce. This study aimed to develop and evaluate the feasibility and preliminary effects of a novel occupational therapy group intervention targeting sleep in people with MS.

A five-week group program was developed, inspired by fatigue management principles and grounded in the Person–Environment–Occupation–Performance (PEOP) model. The intervention was tested with two groups (n = 8) using a single-subject A–B–B1 design. Participants completed daily self-ratings of sleep quality and daytime tiredness (1–10 scale) across baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases. Secondary outcomes were assessed using standardized scales for sleep quality, daytime sleepiness, fatigue impact, and disease-specific quality of life. Feasibility and participant experience were assessed through a post-intervention questionnaire.

Visual analysis showed clear positive trends across the group. Mean sleep quality and daytime tiredness improved by 42% from baseline to follow-up. Low-energy days (<3) decreased, indicating greater day-to-day stability. Individual trajectories varied, with steady, delayed, or fluctuating responses, indicating that changes reflect personal and contextual differences. Secondary outcomes supported these findings, with clinically meaningful improvements (80% and more) in sleep, fatigue, and disease impact for most participants.

Survey responses indicated high satisfaction with content, structure, and peer support. These findings suggest that a structured, occupation-focused sleep intervention is feasible, well received, and potentially effective in MS rehabilitation, warranting larger controlled studies.

118 Translating Research into Practice: Occupational Therapy for Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Objective

Despite recognised benefits of occupational therapy (OT) for people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), the translation of evidence into clinical practice remains a significant challenge, highlighting the need to bridge the know-do gap. This project aimed at reviewing the effectiveness of OT interventions for PwMS and mapping the facilitators and barriers to evidence-based practice (EBP) to develop an implementation plan.

Methods

We conducted a Cochrane systematic review of OT effectiveness in PwMS, an international clinician survey and a mapping review of barriers and facilitators across six levels of Grol & Wensing. Findings are categorised using the CFIR framework and linked to ERIC implementation strategies.

Results

We found twenty studies (1628 participants) showing OT may offer short-term benefits for daily functioning (SMD 0.22–1.19) and mental quality-of-life (QoL) (SMD 0.33–0.68), but certainty of evidence is low, particularly regarding long-term effects and in severe cases or low-resource settings. Adverse effects were rarely reported. Effects on physical QoL and participation were small, inconsistent, or very uncertain. Barriers to implementation were multifaceted (limited time, insufficient training, organisational constraints, lack of mentorship). Key facilitators were motivation, peer support, and access to resources. A five-step implementation plan was developed.

Conclusion

OT interventions may improve daily functioning and mental health-related QoL in people with MS, particularly in the short term. Better-designed trials with consistent outcome reporting are needed to strengthen the evidence base. A stepwise context-sensitive implementation approach is needed to develop sustainable evidence-based OT for PwMS and to close the evidence-practice gap in MS care.

120 Neuropsychological Interventions in Progressive Multiple Sclerosis: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background:

Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (PMS) is associated with ongoing disability progression, for which pharmacological therapies often have limited impact. There is a growing need for neuropsychological approaches to maintain functioning and quality of life in PMS. However, the evidence guiding such interventions remains fragmented and poorly implemented into clinical practice. This systematic review synthesised evidence for psychosocial and cognitive rehabilitation interventions in PMS and identified implications for neuropsychological assessment, intervention, and service delivery.

Methods:

Studies published from 2000-2025 that examined non-pharmacological interventions targeting neuropsychological outcomes in adults with PMS were identified. Eligible studies included psychological, behavioural, or cognitive rehabilitation interventions reporting cognitive, emotional, or functional outcomes.

Results:

Psychological and behavioural treatments were consistently associated with improvements in emotional wellbeing, adjustment and acceptance of progressive disease. Mindfulness- and acceptance-based approaches strengthened psychological flexibility and self-efficacy, while energy conservation programmes reduced fatigue impact and supported daily functioning. Qualitative findings highlighted the value of group delivery and peer support in enabling behavioural change and maintaining participation.

Cognitive rehabilitation approaches demonstrated varied effects. Compensatory and therapist-led approaches improved self-awareness, strategy use, and everyday cognitive functioning. Computer-based cognitive training yielded variable objective cognitive outcomes but often improved subjective cognition and mood.

Interventions were feasible, with strong adherence and acceptability. Remote and group-based delivery enhanced accessibility. However, inconsistency in outcome measures and long-term follow-up remain significant limitations.

Conclusions:

Findings indicate that neuropsychological interventions should be central to PMS care, given their alignment with the needs of PMS, focusing on preserving function and quality of life.

126 Using virtual reality to detect cognitive fatigability in daily-life tasks for persons with MS: a feasibility study

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Abstract

Introduction: Cognitive fatigability (CF)-measurable performance decline over time during cognitive tasks- may support to understand subtle cognitive alterations experienced by persons with MS. Existing neuropsychological assessments may not sufficiently reflect how CF unfolds during everyday activities. A longer-duration measurement with ecologically valid tasks is needed, as well as knowledge on physiological correlates of CF.

Method: This prospective study examined the feasibility of a novel testprotocol. Women (18-55 years) with relapsing-remitting MS completed a fatigue-inducing protocol of a 15-minutes virtual reality-shopping task. Changes over time between segments at 5 (T1), 10 (T2) and 15 minutes (T3) in behavioural (reaction time, accuracy) and physiological (heart rate variability) variables were measured. Self-reported momentary cognitive fatigability was scored using Visual Analogue Scale (VAS).

Results: Preliminary results in 10 participants (45.2 ± 9.1 years, EDSS 2.8) showed significant improvements over time in task performance for accuracy ($F=7.051$, $p=0.005$) and reaction time ($X^2(2)=8.600$, $p=0.014$). At T3 moderate-strong correlations between VAS and accuracy (0.69, $p=0.03$) and between VAS and reaction time (-0.72, $p=0.018$) were found. With a mean NASA-TLX score of 45.2 (± 12.3) the protocol seemed demanding without being excessively burdensome. The physiological measurements are not processed as of yet.

Conclusion: These preliminary results suggest that the fatigue-inducing protocol is well tolerated and feasible. Although participants reported increasing levels of CF during the task, no clear pattern of CF in the behavioural responses emerged. Improved accuracy and faster reaction times during task-progression suggest learning effects in performance, requiring further research.

Final category: Rehabilitation of communication and swallowing in Multiple Sclerosis and related disorders

This chapter focuses on restorative and compensatory rehabilitation for communication, swallowing, and fatigue—three pillars of daily functioning for individuals with Multiple Sclerosis. Maintaining clear communication is vital for patient advocacy and social connection, while safe swallowing ensures proper nutrition and prevents complications like pneumonia. Furthermore, because fatigue can hinder all aspects of recovery, mastering energy conservation is crucial for sustaining activity and managing symptom severity.

76 Exploring the Clinical Utility of DYMUS and EAT-10 in Speech Therapy for Oropharyngeal Dysphagia in Multiple Sclerosis: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Introduction

People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) may develop oropharyngeal dysphagia (OD), significantly affecting quality of life and causing psychosocial impact.

Objectives

To evaluate the effect of structured speech therapy on oropharyngeal dysphagia in PwMS using the Dysphagia in Multiple Sclerosis Questionnaire (DYMUS) and the Eating Assessment Tool-10 (EAT-10).

Methods

A pre-post pilot study was conducted including twelve participants (66.7% women; mean age 50.5 years; mean EDSS score 5), predominantly with secondary progressive MS. Dysphagia severity was assessed using DYMUS and EAT-10 at baseline (T1) and post-intervention (T2). The intervention: 16 weekly 30-minute speech therapy sessions targeting swallowing function.

Results

No statistically significant changes were observed in DYMUS or EAT-10 scores at the group level. The prevalence of dysphagia for solids remained stable. According to EAT-10, four participants improved, one remained stable, and seven worsened. However, clinically relevant individual changes were observed: one participant improved from moderate to mild dysphagia, and another shifted from mixed dysphagia to liquid-only dysphagia.

Conclusion

Although no statistically significant changes were detected at the group level, clinically meaningful improvements in individual cases suggest speech therapy may have a beneficial role in selected PwMS with dysphagia. These findings highlight the potential contribution of speech therapy within multidisciplinary rehabilitation approaches. However, small sample

size and the absence of instrumental assessments (e.g., MECV-V, videofluoroscopy) limit interpretation and external validity of the results. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples in terms of age, sex, and EDSS, as well as objective swallowing assessments, to better characterize treatment effects

Technology-enhanced rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis and related disorders

This chapter highlights how technologies such as robotics, virtual reality, telerehabilitation, and AI can enable high-intensity, personalized interventions while supporting monitoring and biomarker identification. Aligned with the Conference's focus, it addresses a central challenge in MS rehabilitation: balancing recovery and compensation in a clinically meaningful way. Further, it reinforces RiMS' commitment to multidisciplinary, innovation-driven, and patient-centred care, ultimately supporting more adaptive pathways to improve participation, autonomy, and quality of life.

2 Smoking Cessation Intervention for People with Multiple Sclerosis: Results of a Feasibility Study

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Abstract

Background: Smoking accelerates disease progression in people with MS (pwMS). To address this risk factor, we designed and evaluated an MS-specific smoking cessation program.

Methods: The intervention consisted of five group sessions over three weeks and was based on a generic smoking cessation program ("Rauchfrei-Programm") utilizing aspects from cognitive behavioural therapy. The program was led by certified trainers and included MS-specific content throughout. Feasibility outcomes, including adherence, acceptability, and participant feedback, were assessed three weeks post-intervention. Smoking cessation was evaluated three- and twelve-weeks post-intervention. Recruitment took place via our own institution and MS centres and clinics across Germany, as well as online.

Results: Between November 2024 and May 2025, we screened 130 individuals, with 99 found to be eligible. Of the 48 pwMS who started the intervention, 40 (83%) completed the three-week follow-up, and 37 (77%) the 12-week follow-up. All participants who completed the acceptability questionnaire (n=39) (three-week follow-up) stated that they would recommend the program to other pwMS, indicating strong acceptability. Quit rates were 48% (n=23) after three weeks and 25% (n=12) after twelve weeks.

Conclusion: Results show high adherence, acceptability, and promising quit rates for the newly developed smoking cessation intervention for pwMS. Future research should focus on the implementation of this program into standard care, while continuing to monitor participant feedback and quit rates. The findings further suggest that this tailored approach might be a promising way to adapt existing smoking cessation programs to other patient groups with chronic or neurological conditions.

4 EXOPULSE Mollii Suit Improves Balance and Mobility, Reduces Spasticity and Enhances Quality of Life: A Randomized-Controlled Trial in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background: Persons with multiple sclerosis (MS) could experience reduced mobility, spasticity, pain, fatigue, and altered quality of life. The available therapeutic strategies are faced with unmet needs, and nonpharmacological therapies, such as transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), constitute an additional promising intervention. Unlike conventional TENS devices with a limited number of electrodes, the EXOPULSE Mollii Suit consists of a jacket and pants that enable a simultaneous stimulation of 40 muscle groups and hence address the diffuse symptoms topography.

Methods: The current study consisted of two phases: a first randomized, sham-controlled, double-blind, crossover trial during which every participant underwent a single one-hour session of active or sham stimulation using EXOPULSE Mollii Suit (washout interval: two weeks), and a second open-label period during which the sessions were repeated every other day for four weeks. 32 adult patients with MS-related spasticity were included and evaluated before and after each phase. Phase 1 and 2 outcomes consisted of balance (primary outcome), spasticity, mobility, fatigue, and pain. Quality of life and additional outcomes were assessed in phase 2.

Results: Compared to sham, a single session of active intervention led to significant effects on balance, spasticity, and fatigue during phase 1 ($p < 0.05$). Following the repetition of stimulation sessions during phase 2, sustained and/or emerging effects were significantly observed with regard to balance, mobility, spasticity and quality of life ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: Using EXOPULSE Mollii Suit appears to yield beneficial clinical effects in persons with MS, and repeating the stimulation seems to optimize these benefits.

12 Quantitative assessment of the efficacy of an innovative telerehabilitation protocol AI-driven

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Abstract

Despite physical rehabilitation has been shown effective in improving motor function in people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS), symptom burden, healthcare constraints, and geographic distance from specialized centers, can limit the access to dedicated programs. Telerehabilitation has the potential to allow pwMS to perform unsupervised exercises at home using personal devices. However, since there is limited evidence of the actual effectiveness of such approach, we employed 3D gait analysis to assess an innovative telerehabilitation platform (Wizecare™), designed to deliver personalized exercise programs and provide real-time feedback on movement features through AI-based algorithms.

Thirteen pwMS (EDSS 2.0–6.5) completed a short-term exercise program delivered through the telerehabilitation system, consisting of eight 45-minute sessions performed twice weekly. Spatio-temporal parameters and sagittal kinematics at the hip, knee, and ankle during gait were assessed at baseline and after the intervention using 3D gait analysis. Inter- and intralimb coordination were also assessed using angle–angle diagrams (cyclograms).

The results show a significant (and clinically meaningful) increase in gait speed (+0.15m/s) originated by a concurrent increase in stride length and cadence. The dynamic range of motion improved at the hip, knee, and ankle joints. We also detected an improvement of intra-limb symmetry, as indicated by larger knee–ankle and hip–knee cyclogram areas.

Overall, the intervention demonstrated a clear efficacy in terms of improved spatio-temporal parameters and joint kinematics, resulting in gait patterns closer to the physiologic conditions. These findings highlight the potential of the WizeCare platform as a tool for remotely delivered, rehabilitation for pwMS.

19 Do People with Multiple Sclerosis Accept Humanoid Social Robots? Insights from a Human–Robot Interaction Study

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Abstract

Background: Social robots (SRs) are increasingly integrated into daily life, with applications spanning education, industry, culture, and healthcare. Despite their potential across sensory–motor, cognitive, and affective domains, their use in people with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) remains largely unexplored.

Objectives: To evaluate the usability of a SR in PwMS, compare experiences with age-matched healthy subjects (HS), identify predictors of usability, and explore whether language reflects robot appraisal.

Methods: PwMS and HS completed four tasks with the humanoid robot Pepper (SoftBank Robotics). Usability was evaluated with the SUS. Additional measures included attitudes toward robots (GAToRS), robot-related factors (Godspeed), task effort (NASA-TLX), personality traits (I-TIPI), cognition (DIGICOG-MS) and upper-limb difficulties (AMSQ). Language from semi-structured interviews was analyzed using Natural Language Processing (NLP).

Results: SUS scores were high and comparable across groups (PwMS M=81.0; HS M=77.8; p=.389). PwMS reported more negative societal-level robot attitudes (GAToRS: p=.023) and perceived Pepper as more anthropomorphic and intelligent (Godspeed ANTR: p=.007; INT: p=.023). Visuospatial (ρ=-0.632, p=.003) and verbal (ρ=-0.504, p=.023) memory via DIGICOG-MS, and agreeableness from I-TIPI (ρ=0.491, p=.028) correlated with anthropomorphism. Exploratory stepwise regressions indicated that conscientiousness, robot attitudes, and upper-limb deficits explained 64% of SUS variance, while task frustration explained 48%. NLP analyses revealed no between-group differences, with both PwMS and HS exhibiting a positive emotional tone.

Conclusion: This study provides the first empirical evidence of SR usability in PwMS. Psychological aspects, functional abilities and prior attitudes shape user experience. Integrating clinical, psychological, and language measures may support tailored interventions with SRs in MS.

27 AI-based telerehabilitation for multiple sclerosis: feasibility and usability in a multicenter pilot study

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Abstract

Telerehabilitation has emerged as a promising approach to improve access to exercise-based rehabilitation for people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS). However, many existing systems remain limited by their complexity, reliance on additional hardware, and lack of real-time feedback on exercise performance. Artificial intelligence (AI)-based platforms may help overcome these barriers by enabling accurate movement tracking and feedback using standard consumer devices. This prospective, multicentre, single-arm pilot study aimed to evaluate the feasibility and usability of an AI-based telerehabilitation system in pwMS across multiple international sites.

Thirty-four pwMS were enrolled in a 4-week telerehabilitation program comprising 8 sessions, including both standard and AI-supported (MoveAI) exercises. Primary outcomes included recruitment, retention, adherence, and compliance. Usability was assessed using the Telehealth Usability Questionnaire (TUQ) and semi-structured interviews. Exploratory mobility outcomes were assessed at baseline and post-intervention.

Retention was high, with a low drop-out rate (5.8%). Adherence was greater for MoveAI exercises (68.3% with a compliance of 70.7%) compared with standard exercises (48.4%). Usability was rated positively (mean TUQ score: 86.8), supported by qualitative findings indicating good acceptability, perceived benefits, and ease of use. Reported challenges included technical issues related to camera positioning and movement recognition. Exploratory analyses demonstrated significant improvements in mobility outcomes, including gait performance (T25FW), balance (Mini-BESTest), and patient-reported walking ability (MSWS-12).

The AI-based telerehabilitation system showed good feasibility and usability in pwMS, with higher adherence to AI-supported exercises. These findings highlight its potential to improve engagement and accessibility in rehabilitation, warranting further evaluation in a multicentre randomized controlled trial.

31 Integrating Rehabilitation into the Electronic Health Record in Multiple Sclerosis: The Smart FSE Multicenter Initiative

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) management requires coordinated and multidisciplinary efforts. However, rehabilitation data are often fragmented and poorly integrated within healthcare systems, limiting continuity of care and reducing their value for clinical decision-making and research. The Italian Electronic Health Record (EHR 2.0) offers a unique opportunity to address these gaps, although structured integration of rehabilitation data remains limited.

Objectives: To implement and evaluate a multicenter model integrating rehabilitation data into the national EHR, improving clinical care pathways, patient engagement, and research capacity in MS.

Methods: Smart FSE is an add-on module of the national SMART REHAB-MS platform, implemented across AISM Rehabilitation Services and coordinated by the NeuroBRITE Research Center (Genoa). The project involves a multidisciplinary network of healthcare professionals and data scientists. Rehabilitation data (functional outcomes, patient-reported outcomes, and care processes) are standardized and integrated into the EHR using national interoperability standards. The implementation follows four phases: pilot validation, rollout, evaluation, and optimization. Key performance indicators include care continuity, data completeness, and patient engagement.

Results: The initiative is expected to involve over 2,850 people with MS and more than 150 healthcare professionals. Preliminary outcomes include improved accessibility of rehabilitation information within care pathways, enhanced multidisciplinary coordination, and increased patient participation. The system enables the generation of longitudinal real-world datasets supporting outcome evaluation and predictive modeling in rehabilitation.

Conclusions: Smart FSE provides a scalable framework to embed rehabilitation within digital health infrastructures, strengthening the role of MS centers as integrated clinical and research hubs.

39 Implementing a digital platform to support in-patient rehabilitation service

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Abstract

The digital era and the demand for more cost-effective healthcare services challenge the traditional delivery of in-patient rehabilitation in Norway. Improving efficiency in administrative tasks—such as scheduling appointments, collecting outcome measures, and documenting in electronic medical records—may free valuable time for direct patient care. To address these challenges, MS-Senteret Hakadal has implemented a digital platform to enhance communication, coordination, and patient engagement throughout the rehabilitation process.

The implementation of the app was introduced gradually to ensure sufficient digital competence among clinicians and support a clear, understandable, and safe user experience for patients. This stepwise approach enabled continuous learning, reduced the threshold for digital adoption, and supported a stable, well-integrated transition from paper-based to digital processes.

The app supports key phases of the patient journey, including pre-admission preparation, individualized information during the rehabilitation stay, and access to the rehabilitation plan after returning home. It includes modules for digital self-reporting, intervention planning, and secure communication with the interdisciplinary team. For clinicians, the app increases efficiency by supporting documentation through an AI-generated speech-to-text function.

Patient feedback indicates an easy-to-use app, with a clear preference for the digital calendar compared to the former paper version, and for receiving written information in the app rather than on paper. No negative feedback was reported regarding the use, although some noted minor distress in being more dependent of the mobile phone.

Further implementation will expand to integrating long-term follow-up rehabilitation plans.

54 A Technological System for the Assessment of Motor and Cognitive Functions during Activities of Daily Living in People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Background

People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) experience difficulties in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). Recent technological advances enable the monitoring of motor and cognitive functions in real-world settings, providing objective and continuous assessments. This study evaluates AI-MOKa, a system integrating wearable sensors and AI algorithms, to measure motor and cognitive ability during ADL in PwMS and healthy controls (HC).

Materials and Methods

Participants performed a coffee-making task derived from AMPS (Assessment of Motor and Process Skills), wearing Tobii eye-tracking glasses and Pedar sensorized insoles. Metrics collected included pupil diameter (as an index of cognitive load), time spent in different areas, task duration, number of steps, cadence, weight distribution. Data were compared between PwMS and HC.

Results

Twenty PwMS (age M(SD): 55±11 years; 12 F, 8 M; disease duration M(SD): 15±6 years; 15 RR, 1 PP, 5 SP; EDSS M(SD): 2.8±1.39) and 20 healthy controls (age M(SD): 47±15 years; 11 F, 9 M) were included. Significant differences ($p < 0.1$) between groups were observed in maximum pupil diameter (left and right), resting pupil diameter and time spent in the “coffee area” (lower in PwMS), as well as mean minimum pupil diameter and time spent in the “living area” (lower in HC). No differences were observed in motor parameters.

Conclusions

PwMS appear to organize the activity differently and show reduced modulation of cognitive load compared to HC. AI-MOKa may therefore represent an innovative approach for the objective and continuous assessment of ADL in real-life contexts.

57 A multimodal digital lifestyle intervention in people with multiple sclerosis: is it all about the money? A cost-effectiveness evaluation

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Abstract

Introduction: Despite advances in disease-modifying therapies, multiple sclerosis (MS) remains associated with irreversible disability progression, persistent symptom burden, and productivity losses, contributing to high societal costs. Lifestyle interventions may improve outcomes, but their economic value remains unclear.

Objectives: To evaluate the economic impact of a multimodal lifestyle intervention in MS by (1) assessing 24-month societal costs and health-related quality of life (HRQoL) trajectories and (2) conducting a 3-month exploratory cost-effectiveness analysis within the Lifestyle Intervention in MS (LIMS) study.

Methods: Societal costs (healthcare use, informal care, productivity losses) and HRQoL were assessed. Longitudinal trajectories over 24 months were analyzed using linear mixed-effects models. An exploratory cost-effectiveness analysis compared the 3-month intervention period with a within-participant pre-intervention (run-in) period.

Results: 665 people with MS participated (mean age 46.1±10.8 years; 85% female; disease duration 7.2 [2.5–13.8] years). Total societal costs decreased during the intervention period (cost-ratio 0.87, 95%CI 0.76–1.00) and further declined during the follow-up period (cost-ratio 0.70, 95%CI 0.61–0.82). The exploratory cost-effectiveness analysis indicated that the LIMS program dominated usual care from a societal and employer perspectives, reflecting lower costs (Δ€-546 and Δ€-548) alongside modest improvements in HRQoL (Δ0.002). From the healthcare perspective, the intervention was associated with higher costs (Δ€187) and improved HRQoL (Δ0.002), indicating a cost–effectiveness trade-off.

Conclusion: The multimodal LIMS intervention was associated with reductions in societal costs and modest improvements in HRQoL, suggesting that lifestyle-based approaches may represent a potentially cost-efficient complement to conventional MS care.

63 BrainMotion MS: a digital dual-task rehabilitation application for people with multiple sclerosis – user experience

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Abstract

Introduction
Multiple sclerosis (MS) is associated with motor and cognitive impairments that affect gait and activities of daily living (1). Dual-task (DT) rehabilitation is recommended but remains difficult to access in routine clinical practice (2). Home-based digital solutions represent an innovative approach to improving accessibility and adherence to care. BrainMotionMS is a mobile application dedicated to DT rehabilitation in people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS). The aim of this study was to assess the feasibility of using the application in pwMS.

Methods
A focus group study was conducted in 9 pwMS (7 women, 2 men) with mild to moderate disability (EDSS 0–5). Participants used BrainMotionMS independently at home for two weeks (4 DT rehabilitation sessions/week, 20 minutes per session). Evaluation was based on a satisfaction questionnaire, usability assessment (System Usability Scale), and subjective (cognitive) workload assessment (NASA-TLX). DT difficulty was assessed using a Likert scale.

Results
Installation and initial use were considered easy by 94% of pwMS. Understanding of the motor and cognitive instructions was considered clear by 94% of pwMS. Usability was excellent (mean = 93.5 ± 7.4). Perceived DT difficulty was moderate (mean = 3 ± 1.3). The application was considered motivating by 100% and perfectly suited to daily needs by 75% of participants. Adherence to the prescribed session schedule was 91.7%.

Discussion
BrainMotionMS appears feasible, well accepted, and relevant for independent home use in pwMS. These preliminary findings suggest that the application represents an appropriate preliminary step before conducting a multicenter study aimed at evaluating its clinical effectiveness.

66 An IMU-based approach to assess inter- and intra-limb coordination during the six-minute walking test in people with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Although the six-minute walk test (6MWT) is a reliable and ecologically valid measure of functional exercise capacity in people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS), kinematic adaptations during the test remain poorly understood. This study employed a wearable motion capture system to assess sagittal kinematics of the hip, knee, and ankle, analyzing inter- and intra-limb coordination throughout the test.

Sixty-five pwMS (EDSS 0–6.5) and 51 unaffected individuals performed a 6MWT while wearing an 8-sensor IMU system. Lower limb kinematics were evaluated minute-by-minute using accelerations and angular velocities recorded from the trunk and lower limbs.

Inter-limb coordination was quantified using angle-angle diagrams (cyclograms) and the Phase Coordination Index (PCI), while intra-limb coordination was assessed via cyclogram area for hip–knee and knee–ankle joint pairs.

PwMS exhibited significantly higher PCI values than controls, with PCI increasing linearly in both groups. However, by minute 6, the increase was greater in controls (+32%, p=0.001) compared to pwMS (+12%, not significant). Similar linear trends of increase were observed for inter-limb joint cyclograms: however, controls showed larger increases over time, whereas pwMS presented greater cyclogram areas at minute 1. A significant and comparable reduction in knee–ankle coordination was observed in both groups.

These findings confirm impaired inter- and intra-limb coordination in pwMS and show that fatigue during the 6MWT worsens coordination in both groups. Notably, the magnitude of deterioration was often smaller in pwMS. Further research is needed to clarify the influence of fatigability and disability level on these adaptations.

75 The Gestus Project: Automated Outdoor Motion Capture for Neurorehabilitation with Wearable GNSS–IMU Sensors

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Abstract

Assessing motor performance in ecologically valid settings is increasingly important in neurorehabilitation, as outdoor rehabilitation may enhance engagement and better reflect patients' functional abilities in daily life. In this context, quantitative movement analysis plays a key role in evaluating the severity of motor impairments and monitoring rehabilitation progress, allowing clinicians to make informed decisions based on objective measurements.

Laboratory motion capture systems are widely used to record human movement with high accuracy and quantify rehabilitation outcomes. However, these systems typically rely on optical infrastructures and controlled environments, which limit their use in outdoor scenarios or large-scale environments. Wearable sensing technologies, such as inertial measurement units (IMUs), offer a portable alternative but come with limitations, including orientation drift over time and the inability to reconstruct the body's global translation reliably. Furthermore, many motion analysis workflows require multiple manual processing steps and specialized software tools, which may limit their adoption in clinical settings.

To address these limitations, the Gestus project proposes an automated cloud-based pipeline for outdoor human motion analysis using wearable sensors equipped with Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receivers and IMUs. The system integrates wearable sensing hardware with automated cloud processing to reconstruct human motion while minimizing user intervention. GNSS and IMU data are combined to extract clinically relevant gait parameters. By enabling objective motion analysis in natural environments while reducing user intervention, this approach may support more scalable and ecologically valid assessment and monitoring of gait and mobility for neurorehabilitation applications.

81 Distinct cognitive–motor prioritization strategies in multiple sclerosis: a dual-task cost clustering approach

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Abstract

Cognitive-motor interference is common in people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS). Dual-Task Cost (DTC) can provide insight into task prioritization; however existing evidence remains inconsistent. In this study, we explored the presence of cognitive-motor phenotypes in PwMS using clustering techniques.

Sixty-one PwMS (38 females; age=51.3±12.1; EDSS=2.71±1.33; Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale=13.43±8.62; Symbol Digit Modalities Test=50.33±15.01; Timed Up and Go=9.28±3.83) performed motor single tasks (simple walking-SW and complex walking-CW, while holding a cup) and cognitive single tasks (Digit Span Backward-DSB; Serial Subtraction by 7-By7, Clock task-CT; Word List Generation Semantic-WLGS). Participants also performed combined cognitive-motor dual tasks (DT) (SW-DSB, SW-By7, SW-CT, SW-WLGS; CW-DSB, CW-By7, CW-CT, CW-WLGS). For each DT, motor and cognitive DTC were calculated and hierarchical clustering was applied.

Three clusters have been identified; one single case was excluded from the analysis. Cluster 1 (N=17) included PwMS who prioritized motor tasks, primarily during DSB and By7 cognitive conditions. Cluster 2 (N=20) and 3 (N=23) included PwMS who prioritized cognitive tasks, mainly during WLGS and CT, or By7, respectively. Demographic and clinical characteristics did not differentiate clusters, whereas poorer cognitive single-task performance appeared to drive cognition-first prioritization strategies. Moreover, distinct patterns of association between DT performance and mood, cognitive and motor function were observed across clusters.

DTC-based clustering may help identify subgroups of PwMS with distinct prioritization strategies during DT. Cognition-first strategies adopted by individuals with poorer cognitive single-task performance may increase the risk of postural instability or falls and could be targeted through personalized rehabilitation interventions.

88 Innovative virtual reality software implementing principles of neurophysiological rehabilitation improves the upper limb function and quality of life in people with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Introduction: Virtual reality is a promising tool in the physiotherapy of people with multiple sclerosis, offering a motivating therapeutic environment.

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of tailored immersive virtual reality physiotherapy utilizing neuroproprioceptive “facilitation and inhibition” on upper limb function and quality of life.

Methods: In this randomized controlled trial, participants were offered an 8-week rehabilitation program (total of 15 hours, twice weekly). The intervention group received VR-based therapeutic software integrating Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation and Motor Program Activating Therapy, with a physiotherapist actively optimizing movement. The control group followed an identical program without VR. Outcomes included the Nine-Hole Peg Test (NHPT) and the Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale (MSIS-29), analyzed using a two-way repeated measures ANOVA for group, time, and their interaction.

Results: Both groups improved fine motor function in the NHPT for the dominant hand, with significantly greater improvement in the control group ($p = 0.013$). For the non-dominant hand, improvements were comparable between groups ($p < 0.001$ for time; $p = 0.449$ for interaction). Quality of life improved over time across total MSIS-29 scores and both physical and psychological subscales ($p < 0.001$; $p < 0.001$; $p = 0.017$), with no significant between-group differences.

Conclusion: Both physiotherapy approaches improved upper limb function and quality of life. VR is an engaging therapeutic tool while preserving the physiotherapist’s role. Larger randomized studies are needed to confirm non-inferiority or superiority.The study was supported by the Charles University, project GA UK No. 202322. Supported by the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, grant No. NW26-09-00096.

94 Development of a Machine Learning Model to Detect High Risk Near Falls in People with Multiple Sclerosis During Volitional Stepping Training

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Abstract

Falls were a major health concern in people with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS). Although exercise-based interventions were shown to improve balance, their effectiveness in reducing falls remained inconclusive, due to insufficient training dose and inadequate exercise challenge, especially in individuals with higher disability. Mixed Reality (MR) was proposed as a promising solution by enabling individualized, adaptive, and home-based volitional stepping training. A key component for safe implementation was the detection of near-falls during training, defined as loss-of-balance events requiring compensatory responses.

This observational longitudinal study aimed to develop a machine learning algorithm to detect high-risk near-falls during volitional stepping tasks in PwMS. Fifteen PwMS performed volitional stepping training guided by auditory and visual cues. Head-mounted inertial measurement unit (IMU) data were collected during the tasks. Near-falls were identified through video recordings by blinded raters and classified based on compensatory postural adjustments into high- or acceptable-risk categories. A convolutional neural network (CNN) was trained using IMU signals to automatically detect high-risk events.

Preliminary data from 49 assessments in 18 PwMS (EDSS 5.5 ± 1.03; age 53.7 ± 1; 78% female) identified 239 near-fall events, of which 49 were classified as high-risk. Preliminary results from model training showed an accuracy higher than 90% in the agreement between near-fall events identified by the CNN and those identified by the physiotherapist.

These findings supported the feasibility of identifying high-risk near-falls using wearable sensor data. Integrating such algorithms into MR systems could will enable the closed-loop real-time adaptation of exercise difficulty, ensuring both safety and sufficient challenge.

95 Intermittent Negative Pressure Reduces Spinal Excitability in Multiple Sclerosis: Neurophysiological Evidence from Soleus H-Reflex Modulation

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Abstract

Introduction: Spasticity is a common and disabling symptom in people with Multiple Sclerosis (pwMS). Intermittent negative pressure (INP) therapy delivered through the FlowOx (CE-marked medical device) has recently been proposed as a non-pharmacological intervention to improve peripheral circulation, with preliminary evidence showing reductions in self-reported spasticity, pain, and sleep disturbances in pwMS. However, the neurophysiological mechanisms underlying these beneficial effects remain unclear, particularly whether INP can modulate spinal reflex excitability, usually high in spastic patients.

Objective: To investigate the acute effects of a single session of INP delivered by FlowOx on spinal excitability in pwMS with spasticity, assessed through the soleus H-reflex.

Methods: Twenty pwMS with spasticity (11 males, 9 females; mean±SD Age:49±9years; BMI:22.6±1.7kg/m²; EDSS:5±1,5; VAS:5,1±1; MAS:4±0,5) participated in a single experimental session. INP was applied to the lower limb using FlowOx for 1 hour. Soleu H-reflex recruitment curves were recorded before treatment (PRE), immediately after INP (POST), and 20 minutes after treatment (POST-20). The Hmax/Mmax ratio was calculated as an index of spinal excitability.

Results: The SOL Hmax/Mmax ratio significantly decreased by 13.9% at POST (p=0.001) and remained reduced at POST-20 (−13.7%, p=0.001) compared with PRE values. No significant differences were observed between POST and POST-20 (p=0.995).

Conclusions: The acute decrease in Hmax/Mmax ratio suggests a modulation of Ia-mediated spinal reflex pathways. These findings provide preliminary neurophysiological evidence that INP-based technologies may influence sensorimotor spinal circuitry, supporting their potential role as adjunct tools in technology-enhanced rehabilitation for MS.

101 The effect of unsupervised home based balance exercise versus individual physiotherapy

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Abstract

Introduction

Balance disturbance occurs quite frequently in people with multiple sclerosis (MS) and is subjectively rated by patients as one of the most unpleasant symptoms. Poor balance limits mobility and functional self-sufficiency, leads to falls and injuries, and negatively affects patients' quality of life.

Methods

A group of MS patients were randomized into a individual unsupervised home-based exercise group using the Homebalanc stability platform or an individual physiotherapy group using the Sensorimotor training. The effect of the 4-week balance therapy was evaluated using the following standardized methods: the Berg Balance Scale, the MiniBEST test, the TUG, the Timed 25-foot walk test, and the One-Leg Stand. The subjectively perceived effect was assessed with standard questionnaires: MS Walking Scale-12 and Falls Efficacy Scale. Due to the non-normal distribution of data, non-parametric tests in SPSS were used for evaluation.

Results

A total of 39 people with MS participated in the study. Participants were randomized to a home based exercise (n=20) and a group that received individual physiotherapy (n=19). When comparing the effect between the two groups, no statistically significant difference was found. A statistically significant difference was in both two groups in the Berg Balance test ($p=0.005$ vs. 0.001) and the MiniBEST test ($p=0.014$ vs $p<0.000$).

Conclusion

Home balance training on a stability platform with biofeedback has a comparable effect on improving balance as individual physiotherapy.

103 Smart Light, Slow Response: Assessing Upper Extremity Reaction Time in People with Multiple Sclerosis Using BlazePod – A Tech-Based Preliminary Study

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Abstract

Objective: Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is characterized by demyelination, disrupting neural transmission and impairing functions such as manual dexterity and cognition. This study aimed to evaluate upper extremity (UE) reaction time in people with MS (pwMS) using the BlazePod Reaction Test, integrating cognitive processing with functional UE activity.

Methods: A total of 15 pwMS and 15 age- and sex-matched healthy controls (HC) were included. UE reaction time was assessed using the BlazePod system (Play Coyotta Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel), which utilizes wireless LED sensors to combine cognitive and physical performance. Test was conducted in a seated position using four pods over 30 seconds in two modes: BlazePod Random Test (BPRT) and Focus Test (BPFT). Participants tapped blue-lit pods as quickly as possible; reaction time and total hits were recorded. Additional assessments included Nine Hole Peg Test (NHPT), 15-White Dots Task (15-WDT), lateral grip strength (LGS), and Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT).

Results: pwMS showed significantly worse performance than HC in BPRT reaction time and hits ($p<.001$), BPFT reaction time ($p<.001$), NHPT ($p<.001$–$.003$), 15-WDT ($p=.009$), LGS ($p=.035$), and SDMT ($p<.001$). No significant between-group difference was found in BPFT hits ($p=.098$), although results favored HC. Overall, pwMS demonstrated slower reaction times.

Conclusion: Based on our findings, reaction time is impaired in pwMS from early stages of the disease. BlazePod appears to be a user-friendly system to monitor impairments in UE function and information processing speed. It may also be used in rehabilitation, potentially improving physical and cognitive functions in pwMS.

107 Use of the Exopulse Mollii Suit in People with Multiple Sclerosis: Effects on Upper and Lower Limb Function

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Abstract

Background: The Exopulse Mollii Suit is a wearable neuromodulation device delivering low-frequency electrical stimulation via 58 integrated electrodes. It targets 40 key muscle groups through subthreshold impulses, promoting relaxation of spastic muscles and improving motor function. Its use in people with multiple sclerosis (MS) is increasing, but evidence on its effects on upper and lower limbs remains limited.**Objectives:**To evaluate the effects of the Mollii Suit on motor performance and functional outcomes in both lower and upper limbs in people with MS.**Methods:**Fifteen patients with MS (EDSS 3.5–4.5) were enrolled; six completed the intervention. Participants were assessed at baseline (T0), one week (T1), and eight weeks (T2) post-intervention. The intervention consisted of 10 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. Lower limb assessments included Six-Minute Walk Test, 10-Meter Walk Test, Timed Up and Go, and Berg Balance Scale. Upper limb assessments included Nine-Hole Peg Test, Box and Block Test, handgrip strength, and Jebsen–Taylor Hand Function Test. Quality of life, fatigue, pain, and spasticity were measured using DASH, MFIS, and validated pain and spasticity scales.**Results:**At T1, participants improved in balance, endurance, and mobility, and in upper limb dexterity and motor function, particularly on the more affected side. Pain and spasticity perception also improved. At T2, outcomes slightly declined but remained above baseline.**Conclusions:t**he Exopulse Mollii Suit is a promising non-invasive adjunct to rehabilitation for people with MS, enhancing limb function, motor control, and symptom management.These preliminary results support further research with larger samples to confirm efficacy and optimize treatment protocols.

109 Feasibility of Intensive Visual Stimulation for Upper Limb Rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Upper limb impairment is common and disabling feature in persons with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS), significantly affecting performance in meaningful activities of daily living (ADLs). Rehabilitation approaches have shown increasing potential in improving upper limb function. This pilot study aimed to evaluate the feasibility and preliminary effectiveness of an artificial intelligence (AI)-based, computer-guided Intensive Visual Stimulation (IVS3) intervention for enhancing upper limb function in PwMS.

Ten consecutive PwMS were referred to occupational therapy (OT) (mean age 56.7 ± 10.9 years; 70% female; Expanded Disability Status Scale score 4.05 ± 1.81). Disease phenotypes included primary progressive (40%), secondary progressive (30%), and relapsing-remitting (30%) forms. Participants completed 20 outpatient OT sessions integrating IVS3 with standard OT counselling. Each session **lasted** 60 minutes. Fine motor function and dexterity were assessed with the Nine-Hole Peg Test (NHPT) and the NHPT with cognitive interference (NHPT&CI). Self-perceived performance and satisfaction in meaningful ADLs were evaluated using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM). Assessments were conducted at baseline and post-intervention.

Statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) were observed across all outcome measures. Participants demonstrated improved manual dexterity in both dominant and non-dominant hands, reflected by enhanced NHPT and NHPT&CI performance. Additionally, COPM performance and satisfaction scores indicated improved self-perceived ADL performance. Paired-samples t-tests were used to analyse differences between measurements (IBM SPSS Statistics, version 31).

These findings suggest that IVS3 is a feasible and potentially effective adjunct to occupational therapy for improving upper limb function and self-perceived ADL performance in PwMS.

113 Perceptive Sensitivity and Accuracy to Walking Speed Dynamics During a 6-Minute-Walk Test in Individuals with Mild Disability due to Multiple Sclerosis and Healthy Controls

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Abstract

Introduction: People with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) show reduced speed and report negative associated experiences while walking. Imprecise multisensory integration may impair interoception during walking. We examined perceptive sensitivity and accuracy for gait speed changes in PwMS and HCs during 6-minute-walk-test (6MWT).

Methods: Thirty-six PwMS (age 46,8 ± 13,2 years; median EDSS 2,5) and thirty-six HCs (age 41,6 ± 12,2 years) performed an instrumented 6MWT (APDM®), and reported perceived gait speed changes by squeezing a time-synchronized handheld sensor. Detection-sensitivity was quantified as ratio between reports-count and speed variability (CV). Objective gait speed fluctuations were identified using event-detection algorithms to extract speed-change events (i.e. event-threshold: tangential acceleration > 0.0125 m/s^2). Reports were considered accurate within 2-second from any event. Detection-accuracy was analyzed using mixed-effects logistic regression including event-frequency as covariate, and complemented with subjective confidence ratings (%).

Results: During the 6MWT, walking speed was lower in PwMS than HCs (1.46±0.23 m/s vs 1.80±0.17 m/s, p<0.001). PwMS had fewer events and reports, lowering Detection-sensitivity (1,03±0,88 vs 2,71±3,31; p=0,006). Detection-accuracy showed a significant group×event-frequency interaction (β=0.474, 95% CI 0.089–0.859, p=0.016): higher event-frequency increased Detection-accuracy odds, with stronger positive association in HCs. Above a reference event-frequency of 4.2 events/minute PwMS had reduced odds of accurate reporting compared with controls. In contrast, HCs reported lower confidence ratings (59,5% ± 19,1%) than PwMS (71,5% ± 18,9%).

Conclusion: PwMS show reduced sensitivity and accuracy in detecting speed variations during prolonged walking compared to HCs, warranting tailored rehabilitation strategies.

114 Assessment of Perception Accuracy for Sit-To-Stand Exercise using a sensorized Chair in Individuals with mild disability due to Multiple Sclerosis and Healthy Controls

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Abstract

Introduction: People with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) show impaired sit-to-stand (STS) performance, however, it is unknown whether its perception is affected by MS. Altered perception during STS may affect motor control and promote fatigue exacerbations. This study examines sit-to-stand perceptual accuracy and awareness in MS and healthy controls (HCs).

Methods: A sensorized chair provided real-time seat-height tracking with precise control. 34 mildly-disabled PwMS (age 45,9± 2,7 EDSS 2,3±1) and 34 HCs (age 40,9±11,9) performed 36 STS trials (~every 10 s), with seat-height changed in fixed steps every 1–3 trials (experimental seat-height range= lower-leg length ±20%). Participants sat-down and immediately stood-up reporting perceived seat-height (from 0-100%). State fatigue was assessed pre/post session; confidence (%) post-session. Correspondence-accuracy was calculated as within-subject correlations between imposed and perceived seat-height. Group differences were tested with an unpaired t-test; within-group associations with fatigue and confidence with Spearman's ρ.

Results: No group differences in Correspondence-accuracy were observed (PwMS 0,88±0,09 vs HCs 0,91±0,10). In contrast, PwMS reported higher confidence than HCs (54,1±19,8% vs 43,7±18,8%; p=0,029). Positive correlation between Correspondence-accuracy and confidence, was found only in HCs (ρ= 0.55). PwMS reported higher state fatigue both pre- (2,56±1,99 vs 1,03±1.04; p=0.0008) and post-session (4,24±2,68 vs 1,98±2,04; p=0.0002) compared with HC. However, Correspondence-accuracy was not associated with state fatigue in either group.

Conclusions: PwMS showed preserved and fatigue independent correspondence-accuracy, but lower awareness. This novel method can provide quantitative insights on perception of self-mobility during STS, relevant for MS-rehabilitation.

121 Robot-assisted gait training versus conventional physiotherapy in moderate-to-severe multiple sclerosis: a randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

Background: Gait and balance impairments are highly prevalent in people with MS (PwMS) and contribute to functional decline, reduced participation, and poorer quality of life. Robot-assisted gait training (Exo) enables intensive, task-specific rehabilitation but comparative evidence with conventional physiotherapy (PT) in moderate-to-severe MS remains limited.

Objective: To compare functional, emotional, quality-of-life, and safety outcomes of robot-assisted gait training using the Atalante exoskeleton versus conventional physiotherapy in PwMS with moderate-to-severe disability.

Methods: This prospective, randomized, rater-blinded clinical trial (NCT06615947) included 77 PwMS (EDDS 6.0–7.0), assigned to Exo (n = 39) or PT (n = 38). Both groups completed 24 sessions over 8 weeks. Primary outcome was walking speed (10MWT). Secondary outcomes included walking endurance, balance mobility perceived walking limitations), fatigue, emotional status, and health-related quality of life. Safety, adherence and usability were also monitored.

Results: The PT group showed a significant improvement in walking speed, with a between-group difference favoring PT at post-intervention, although changes over time were not consistently different across outcomes. Both groups improved in balance, fatigue, and physical quality of life. Emotional outcomes improved modestly, with reductions in depressive symptoms observed only in the Exo group. No serious adverse events occurred, and both interventions were well tolerated with high adherence (>83%). Exo group demonstrated high satisfaction and usability, despite greater perceived technical risk.

Conclusions: Both interventions fielded comparable functional and psychosocial outcomes. Robot-assisted gait training was safe, feasible, and well accepted, supporting its role as a complementary option within comprehensive neurorehabilitation rather than as a superior alternative.

124 Effects of Walking Exercise with or without Closed-Loop Rhythmic Cueing on Spatiotemporal Gait Parameters at Self-Selected Pace in Individuals with MS and Walking Limitations.

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Abstract

Background: Gait disturbance is common in MS and associated with walking and mobility limitations. Recent publications suggest that rhythmic auditory cueing (RC) results in short-term improvement in spatiotemporal (ST) gait parameters, but the combination of RC and exercise has not been thoroughly investigated. We have previously reported the feasibility, safety, and effects on walking capacity of using a closed-loop RC system combined with walking exercise (WE). The purpose of this analysis is to report efficacy on ST gait parameters.

Methods: In this single blind parallel-group pilot RCT. individuals with MS and Timed 25 Foot Walk time 8-30 seconds, were randomized to 16 supervised WE sessions, or WE with closed loop RC (WE-RC). Outcomes were assessed at baseline, week 8 (end of intervention), and week 16. ST gait parameters at self-selected pace were measured on an instrumented walkway.

Results: 17 participants completed all assessment visits (RC-WE=10, WE=7): median (IQR) age 57 (54,61) years, 65% female, 70% progressive course, median (IQR) EDSS 4 (3.5-6.5). There was statistically significant improvement on step length, double support time, and velocity between baseline and 8 weeks for RC-WE, but not for WE. While there were no statistically significant between-group differences on change in ST gait parameters, there was a trend favoring RC-WE for double support time (left p=0.05, right p=0.07) at week 8.

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that adding closed-loop RC to supervised WE may help improve ST gait parameters. These results need to be confirmed on a larger sample, and under unsupervised conditions.

131 Home-based telerehabilitation as continuity of care after intensive rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis: preliminary results of a pilot randomized controlled trial

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Balance impairments are common in people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and significantly affect mobility and fall risk. Intensive rehabilitation programs improve motor performance; however, these gains often decline over time without continued intervention. The aim of this pilot study is to investigate the feasibility of an home-based telerehabilitation program through exergames to ensure continuity of care.

METHODS: Twenty-one individuals with MS were enrolled. Following a 3-week intensive inpatient rehabilitation, they were randomized to intervention (n=11) or control (n=10): participants in the intervention group performed a home-based telerehabilitation program three times per week for 12 weeks with tailored and remotely monitored exergames. The primary outcome was adherence, secondary outcomes included usability and exploratory clinical measures of mobility, balance and quality of life, assessed at baseline (T0), post-rehabilitation (T1), and 3-month follow-up (T2). The preliminary results of this study will be presented below, as six of the twenty-one subjects are currently in the follow-up phase.

RESULTS: Mean age was 49.06 ± 10.54 years, mean EDSS score was 4.35 ± 1.28. Adherence to the telerehabilitation program was high (mean adherence: 93.98%), satisfaction scores indicated good acceptance of the platform (Telehealthcare Satisfaction Questionnaire mean score: 78 ± 11.98). Exploratory analyses suggested a trend toward better maintenance of functional mobility and balance outcomes in the intervention group compared with controls over the follow-up period. No adverse events were reported.

CONCLUSIONS: Home-based telerehabilitation through exergames may represent a feasible strategy to support long-term continuity of care after intensive rehabilitation, with good adherence and manageable technological and rehabilitative challenges.

133 Effects of a Multimodal Exercise Programme on Disability, Physical Acitivity, Fatigue, and Quality of Life in People with Multiple Sclerosis: An Assessor-Blinded Randomized Controlled Study

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Abstract

Background: Multiple sclerosis (MS) leads to progressive disability and is frequently accompanied by reduced physical activity, fatigue, and diminished quality of life. Multimodal exercise programmes are increasingly used to address these impairments in people with MS.

Objective: To investigate the effects of a multimodal exercise programme on disability, physical activity, fatigue, and quality of life in people with MS.

Methods: Twenty-four participants with MS (mean age:47.54±10.44 years; EDSS:3.89±0.79) were randomly allocated to a rehabilitation group or a control group. The rehabilitation group participated in a multimodal exercise programme, while the control group received usual care. The programme consisted of supervised sessions delivered three times per week for 12 weeks through a combination of face-to-face and online sessions via a telerehabilitation platform (TeleNoroRehab). Disability was assessed with the Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite (MSFC), physical activity with accelerometry, fatigue with the Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS), and quality of life with the Multiple Sclerosis International Quality of Life Questionnaire (MusiQoL). Assessments were performed at baseline and post-intervention by a blinded assessor.

Results: Following the 12-week intervention, the rehabilitation group demonstrated significant improvements in MSFC leg and arm Z-scores ($p=0.018$; $p=0.001$), MusiQoL ($p<0.001$), and FSS ($p=0.003$). No significant changes were observed in the control group. Between-group analysis showed greater improvements in fatigue ($p=0.010$) and quality of life ($p=0.001$) in the rehabilitation group.

Conclusion: Multimodal exercise programmes may reduce fatigue and improve quality of life in people with MS. These findings also support the potential of technology-enhanced telerehabilitation approaches to deliver effective rehabilitation.

Invited Lectures

137 Recovery versus Compensation in MS: A False Dichotomy or a Necessary Distinction?

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Abstract

Clinical rehabilitation in multiple sclerosis (MS) is often described as targeting either recovery of impaired function or compensation for persistent deficits. This talk examines whether this distinction is clinically meaningful or overly simplistic. Using examples from motor, cognitive, and fatigue rehabilitation, we review evidence for recovery-based interventions, limits imposed by disease burden and progression, and the practical role of compensatory strategies in daily care. Emphasis is placed on matching interventions to realistic neurobiological capacity, disease stage, and patient goals. Rather than an either–or framework, an integrated, goal-directed approach is proposed to optimize functional outcomes and quality of life in routine clinical practice.

138 Mechanism-Based Physiotherapy for Functional Recovery in Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Contemporary MS management relies on interdisciplinary teams adopting a structured, clinically meaningful approach using ICF Core Sets, which systematically capture the interactions between neurological impairments, functional capacity, and environmental factors. This framework enables interventions to address not only body functions but also activities and participation in everyday life.

Early initiation of physiotherapy should be considered standard care, as it reduces disease activity, prevents functional decline, improves systemic regulation (e.g., fatigue and stress), and enhances overall quality of life.

Regular physiotherapy improves psychological outcomes, including subjective well-being, attitudes towards life, and sleep quality, alongside motor performance such as muscle strength, coordination, balance, mobility, and physical fitness, while reducing the risk of secondary and tertiary complications. Its long-term nature enables flexible adaptation to the fluctuating disease course, ensuring interventions remain aligned with patients' evolving needs. Long-term adherence, patient engagement, and the integration of innovative technologies, such as virtual reality and functional electrical stimulation, further enhance therapeutic benefits.

Physiotherapy drives neurophysiological mechanisms, including central nervous system neuroplasticity and modulation of neuro–psycho–immunological regulation. One of the most promising mechanisms is its capacity to influence gene expression. Our research demonstrates that targeted neuroproprioceptive "facilitation and inhibition" interventions can induce measurable changes in brain function and clinical outcomes, while also modulating long non-coding RNA expression, suggesting a molecular pathway for neuroimmune regulation.

These findings provide a scientific basis to inform mechanism-based rehabilitation strategies, enabling interventions that specifically target neurophysiological and molecular pathways to optimize functional recovery in MS.

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139 Psychological Determinants of Work Instability in MS

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Abstract

Maintaining paid work is a key issue for people with MS (PwMS). Varied factors, including psychological attributes, can influence job retention. PwMS lose employment earlier than expected, even in the era of high efficacy disease modifying treatment.

Identifying risk of job loss is important for early intervention. Work instability describes the extent of any mismatch between functional (in)capacity and work demands at a point in time, and its potential impact on job retention/security. We co-developed the MS Work Instability Scale with PwMS to screen for risk of sickness absence and job loss.

In a 3-year longitudinal study of 208 employed people with MS more than 10% were no longer working at the end of the study. Three variables were predictive of continuing employment: low baseline work instability, high levels of baseline self-efficacy and being less than 50years of age.

We co-developed a UK digital version of an acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) based intervention called 'READY for MS' with four employed pwMS. Regional MS centres in Leeds, London, and Cardiff recruited employed PwMS to an external feasibility randomised-controlled-trial of intervention (digital READY for MS) or control (standard care). Ninety-two pwMS were randomised. Work instability was lower in the READY group compared to control at 6 months. Co-production was crucial in developing an accessible and acceptable adaptation of READY.

In 2024 we started INTER-ACT MS: Implementation of an online resilience-training Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) programme to prevent job loss in MS. We have recruited MS health care professionals and pwMS at 7 UK MS centres (MS Society Award ref:154)

140 Invisible Disorders in MS: Communication and Swallowing Challenges Across Daily Life

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Abstract

Invisible issues such as communication breakdowns and swallowing problems quietly erode quality of life for many people with MS (PwMS). Even in so-called "benign MS," where physical disability stays low after a decade, these problems persist alongside fatigue in 78%, depression in 55%, and cognitive impairment in 38% of PwMS.

Communication challenges strike up to 75% of PwMS, turning simple conversations into exhausting battles. Word-finding difficulties (WFD) top the list at 94%, where everyday terms slip away, leaving people grasping for "you know, that thing." Nearly 40% struggle with relaying stories or opinions clearly, while slow processing and attention lapses make following conversations difficult. These problems do not correlate with age, disease duration, or MS type; they can occur at any time, slashing health-related quality of life.

Cognitive impairment strongly fuels WFD; those with it are nearly five times more likely to have WFD. About 9% of PwMS face WFD without cognitive impairment, hinting at standalone roots. Swallowing disorders add a further challenge, affecting up to 40% of PwMS.

Both communication and swallowing problems are treated by speech-language pathologists. However, current tools to measure these impairments fall short, as they are often not tailored to MS, with low validity that leaves clinicians guessing. Literature reviews spotlight the gaps in communication and swallowing intervention for PwMS. Limited communication-focused studies (seven on articulation, three on language) yield mixed therapy results. Newer MS-specific questionnaires like SMS and CLAMS help pinpoint issues, yet more robust evidence on interventions is needed.

141 Technology-Assisted Rehabilitation in Multiple Sclerosis: Towards Personalized, Evidence-Based Care

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Abstract

Over the past decade, evidence that functional recovery mechanisms and learning are preserved in people with multiple sclerosis (pwMS) has supported the development of technology-assisted rehabilitation. The main aims are to promote high-intensity training within a motivating environment and to increase rehabilitation dose and exposure, including at the community level (i.e., via telerehabilitation). In addition, technology enables longitudinal assessment and monitoring of pwMS functioning, facilitating the identification of potential biomarkers of recovery.

This lecture will address the effects of gait robotics—one of the most widely used technologies for gait training in progressive MS with severe mobility impairment—from multiple perspectives, including central and peripheral mechanisms, investigated through a multimodal approach. Emerging technologies, such as virtual reality, telerehabilitation, and artificial intelligence, will also be discussed in the context of delivering patient-centered, tailored rehabilitation.

142 Assessing Recovery, Compensation, and Progression in MS: Integrating Clinical, Digital, and Contextual Outcomes

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Abstract

Understanding how people with multiple sclerosis (MS) recover, compensate, or progress over time is essential for effective rehabilitation. Each of these processes requires different types of outcome measures. Recovery focuses on regaining function, so sensitive measures of mobility, cognition, and daily activities are needed. Compensation involves learning new strategies to manage limitations and therefore benefits from task-specific assessments that show how people adapt in real life. Progression, however, requires tools that can detect subtle, often hidden changes in disease activity.

Recent studies show that MS progression may begin long before noticeable symptoms appear. Invisible symptoms—such as fatigue, pain, mood changes, and cognitive difficulties—are common and can strongly affect daily functioning, even though they may not be obvious during routine clinical exams. Research also highlights that sex and gender may influence vulnerability to disability and frailty across neurological conditions, meaning that personalised rehabilitation approaches are increasingly important.

Choosing the right outcomes depends on the goal. For example, when aiming to improve physical function, clinicians may use performance-based mobility tests or functional scales. When the goal is to monitor progression, structural MRI, activity monitoring, and digital mobility measures are valuable. New digital tools, such as real-world mobility or cognitive monitoring, show promise in identifying “smouldering” MS and linking everyday activity patterns to brain changes and disability. Standardizing and routinely including psychosocial and contextual factors is essential for better prediction and personalized rehabilitation.

Finally, clear communication with patients about recovery, compensation, and progression helps ensure that goals and expectations remain meaningful and aligned with the person’s rehabilitation journey.

143 The Meaning of Recovery and Compensation: Raising Awareness and Standardized Management of Urogenital Problems in Persons with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Despite the impressive therapeutic achievements in the last years, neither multiple sclerosis (MS) nor its various symptoms can be cured, and therefore, persons with MS (PwMS) should be encouraged to play an active role in the management of their disease in order to maintain and regain autonomy, ability to work and roles in daily life.

In this regard, urogenital problems and particulary neurogenic lower urinary tract dysfunctions (NLUTD) are a huge challenge: they are common in PwMS, have an enormous impact on quality of life, and may cause secondary complications eventually leading to death. However, many PwMS are not aware of these problems or are reluctant to talk about it. The “MS Bladder Check” is a tool designed to raise awareness of urinary symptoms among PwMS and thus enable them to be actively involved in the decision making process. For proper evaluation of NLUTD, we have developed a bladder algorithm that consists of four parameters (micturition frequency, post-void residual, incontinency, urinary tract infections within the last 6 months) that helps to discriminate between the different subtypes of NLUTD and to identify those PwMS who are in need for urodynamics.

In this lecture, the development, validation and usefulness in clinical practice of both tools will be presented and discussed in the framework of the management of urogenital problems and the active role PwMS might play in the recovery of these symptoms in order to regain participation, autonomy and life roles.

144 Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation: Lessons Learned and Futures Imagined

Jenny Freeman[1]
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Abstract

Reflections on evidence, experience, and evolving priorities in a changing therapeutic and technological era.

In this session, Professor Freeman will reflect on key lessons from her career that have helped to shape contemporary MS rehabilitation. She will consider:

- The evolving role of rehabilitation in this disease-modifying treatment era.
- Where evidence has changed practice — and what still hasn't.
- The challenges and opportunities we face in balancing the provision of evidence-based care, person-centred care, and real-world constraints.
- What the next generation of MS rehabilitation professionals might prioritise.

Workshops in Neurorehabilitation

144 The Bobath Concept in Neurorehabilitation

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Abstract

This workshop focuses on the principles of the Bobath Concept as applied in neurorehabilitation. The approach is based on neurodevelopmental treatment strategies aimed at improving postural control, movement coordination, and functional performance in individuals with neurological disorders. There are three key components to the Bobath clinical practice: Functional movement analysis; Skilled facilitation; and, Clinical reasoning. Observational analysis of sequences of movement during task performance determines how the movement differs from typical motor behaviour, including analysis of any compensatory strategies or atypical motor behaviour utilised.

Facilitation is a clinical skill dependent upon the integration of the clinician's stereognostic capacity (the ability to interpret, integrate and execute therapeutic handling). Facilitation comprises three specific aspects: Manual; Verbal; and, Environmental. Therapeutic handling can, for example, be aimed at improving the alignment of body segments and thereby the efficiency of walking. Environmental facilitation may involve the use of light touch as an aid to maintaining balance while standing before transitioning from standing to sitting.

All types of facilitation are taken into account in order to encourage the client's own initiation/termination of movement and/or to create the necessary conditions for a movement experience that the client is not yet able to manage on their own.

145 Digital Biomarkers: Inertial Sensor Technology for Upper Limb Tremor and Automated Speech Analysis

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Abstract

Background
Computerized assessment of motor deficits in multiple sclerosis holds great promise for delivering objective, sensitive, and detailed digital biomarkers that are non-invasive, easy to administer, and scalable. Such biomarkers can enhance disease monitoring and help guide personalized therapeutic interventions.

Objectives:
This workshop will introduce innovative digital motor biomarkers that address both motor and cognitive components of speech and upper-limb tremor. Participants will become familiar with the neurophysiological and technical foundations of digital-biomarker assessment, thereby increasing awareness and facilitating the adoption of these novel approaches in clinical practice and research.

Content and Format:
The workshop integrates a concise theoretical overview with an interactive, hands-on component. Participants will learn core principles and practical approaches for data acquisition, processing, and interpretation. The session is divided into two thematic modules:
1. Speech-based digital biomarkers – Introduction to speech-derived cognitive and motor features; brief recording exercise; hands-on analysis and interpretation of speech data.
2. Upper-limb tremor digital biomarkers – Overview of tremor measurement technologies based on using of accelerometer and gyroscope for measurement of upper-limb tremor, data capture, signal processing, and clinical interpretation).

Expected Outcomes and Relevance:
Participants will acquire hands-on experience applying quantitative objective analyses to speech-based and upper-limb tremor digital biomarkers. Our research demonstrates that these digital biomarkers constitute a sensitive and valuable tool for personalized medicine and for evaluating treatment effects.

Acknowledgements:
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146 rTMS, tDCS, and Vibramoov: Tools for Motor Recovery

Přemysl Vlček[1,2], Daniel Chynorai[3], Helena Ziklová[3], Marcela Grünerová Lippertová[1], Kamila Řasová[1]

Abstract

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is characterised by a constellation of disabling symptoms, including spasticity, fatigue, pain, cognitive impairment, and mood disturbance, that frequently coexist and respond incompletely to pharmacotherapy. Non-invasive stimulation techniques offer mechanistically distinct approaches to these symptoms, yet their respective therapeutic profiles are seldom appraised together in clinical practice.

This workshop presents three technologies through live demonstration and case-based discussion. Functional proprioceptive stimulation (Vibramoov) applies computer-synchronised tendon vibration to generate movement illusions, modulate muscle spindle activity, and promote reciprocal inhibition of spastic muscles. Its principal applications in MS include spasticity management, proprioceptive retraining, and locomotor rehabilitation. Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), including intermittent theta-burst protocols, modulates cortical excitability to reduce spinal hyperexcitability. Meta-analytic data support its efficacy in lower-limb spasticity, and further evidence points to benefits in neuropathic pain and motor recovery, particularly when combined with exercise therapy. Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) delivers weak polarising currents to alter neuronal firing thresholds. In MS, its strongest evidence pertains to fatigue, depressive symptoms, and cognitive processing speed, with emerging data on gait improvement.

Participants will observe the practical setup and application of each device, discuss patient selection and stimulation parameters, and appraise the evidence guiding their clinical use. The workshop aims to provide a clinically oriented framework for integrating these complementary modalities into symptom-specific rehabilitation of persons with MS.

Keywords: *multiple sclerosis, spasticity, fatigue, functional proprioceptive stimulation, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation, transcranial direct current stimulation, neurorehabilitation*

147 Virtual reality in rehabiltation in People with Mulptiple sclerosis; hands on workshop

Miznerova Barbora[1,2], Jindra Reissigova[3], Libor Vasa[4], Jakub Frank[4], Anna Herynkova[2], Lubomír Rodina[5], Tom Philipp[2], Kamila Řasová[5,2]

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Abstract

Background:
Upper limb dysfunction affects up to 75% of people with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), limiting daily activities and independence. Virtual reality (VR) is an promising rehabilitation tool integrating multisensory stimulation and motor learning principles, with potential to support neuroplasticity in physiotherapy in PwMS.

Objectives:
This workshop aims to introduce an innovative VR-based physiotherapy programme targeting upper limb function and trunk stability in PwMS, and to familiarise participants with its neurophysiological rationale and succesful scientific application in randomized controlled trial.

Content and Format:
The workshop will combine a brief theoretical introduction with an interactive, hands-on session. Participants will experience immersive VR based on proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF) and motor programme activating therapy (MPAT). The VR features therapeutic elements, including activation of sitting motor programmes, goal-directed upper limb tasks (e.g. object collection, spiral trajectories), PNF diagonal patterns with trunk involvement, and sit-to-stand transitions in immersive virtual reality. Emphasis is placed on movement quality, repetition, and therapist-guided facilitation and progression. The presented approach is based on a randomised controlled trial conducted over eight weeks, comparing outpatient VR-based therapy with standard neurophysiological physiotherapy.

Expected Outcomes and Relevance:
Participants will gain practical experience with VR-assisted therapy and insight into its integration into clinical practice. Findings from our research suggest comparable effects of VR-based and conventional neurophysiological physiotherapy, supporting VR as a promising extension of rehabilitation strategies for PwMS.

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Teaching Courses

148 Practical Application of theInternational Classification ofFunctioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Set in Clinical Practicefor People with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

MS affects not only mobility but also cognition, fatigue, emotions, bladder function, and participation – domains inadequately captured by conventional scales such as EDSS. The ICF framework shifts the focus from diagnosis to the individual's functioning and needs, providing a foundation for person-centred rehabilitation planning.

Since 2019, our team has been progressively implementing ICF Core Sets – first in research (a stroke rehabilitation RCT, virtual reality-based upper limb rehabilitation and comprehensive physiotherapy programs for people with MS), and more recently in routine clinical practice at Domov sv. Josefa, the only specialized inpatient MS facility in the Czech Republic. We adapted the Brief ICF Core Set for MS and used ICF linking to guide selection of assessment tools.

In this course, we share what we have learned. Participants will learn to assign ICF qualifiers, build categorical profiles from clinical cases, and plan targeted interventions. We show how the ICF profile provides a graphically intuitive overview of the patient's situation, supports interdisciplinary communication, and helps identify overlooked areas such as emotional, cognitive, or urogenital functioning. We discuss where ICF adds the most value: in stroke, it tracks recovery and return to social and work life; in MS, its strength lies in capturing the full complexity of a person's situation – revealing, for example, that a severely disabled individual may be well-adapted and still employed, while a seemingly mildly affected person may be severely limited by depression.

Participants will leave with practical skills for implementing ICF Core Set assessment in their own settings.

149 Possibilities of the Vojta Method in Patients with Multiple Sclerosis

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Abstract

Objective

To present Vojta reflex locomotion (VRL) as a neuromodulatory approach influencing central motor control in patients with multiple sclerosis.

Methods

The presentation is based on clinical studies in MS, neurophysiological studies in healthy subjects, and selected case reports. VRL uses specific somatosensory input from defined positions via stimulation zones to activate innate global movement patterns without active patient participation.

Results

VRL activates a hierarchical network including sensorimotor cortex, cerebellum, basal ganglia, brainstem, and spinal level (Sanz-Esteban et al., 2018; 2021; Hok et al., 2019; Martínek et al., 2022), as well as the cingulate gyrus (areas 23, 24) involved in motor, emotional, and autonomic integration (Martínek et al., 2022). Immediate clinical effects include improved gait speed (TUG) and postural stability, reflecting facilitation at the neuronal level (Lopez et al., 2021; Laufens et al., 1991–2004). Studies report improvements in balance, gait, and fatigue (Pavlíková et al., 2020; Carratalá-Tejada et al., 2022). Long-term effects likely relate to neuroplastic and neurochemical changes, including neuroactive steroids (Angelova et al., 2020), without structural white matter changes (Řasová et al., 2021).

Conclusion

VRL is a facilitation-based approach targeting automatic motor control and preparing the system for subsequent task-oriented therapy. Its effects extend beyond neuronal changes to improved movement quality and functional abilities. Within the ICF framework, effects are seen in body functions, activities, and participation. Effects on autonomic and emotional functions require further study.

150 Rehabilitation Solutions for Severely Disabled Persons

Klara Novotna PhD, Martin Srp PhD

Abstract

This course addresses rehabilitation strategies for people with MS and severe disability (EDSS ≥ 7.0). It offers evidence-based recommendations supported by clinical experience with patients facing advanced functional limitations.

The course emphasizes respiratory physiotherapy as an essential part of preventing secondary complications and maintaining respiratory function. We will describe our workplace's experience with respiratory function training, as well as with therapy for ineffective coughing. This includes a description of specific aids. The course also covers our experience with outpatient physiotherapy for people with EDSS ≥ 7.0.

In addition, the course will also address issues related to promoting self-sufficiency and maintaining quality of life through modern communication support technologies and assistive devices that utilize smart home technology.

Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups Mood & Cognition and Mobility

Title

The Interplay Between Cognition, Mood, and Motor Performance: A Multidimensional Approach for Rehabilitation

Chairs

Jessica Podda & Blanca De Dios Perez (SIG Mood & Cognition); Ludovico Pedullà & Ellen Christin Arntzen (SIG Mobility)

Keynotes

New Insights into the Dual-Task Paradigm - L. Pedullà & J. Podda, NeuroBRITE FISM Research Center, Italy.

From Mood and Cognition to Movement: Psychological Drivers of Adherence in Rehabilitation - M.J. Arevalho, Cemcat and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.

Beyond Silos: Integrating Knowledge for Advanced Clinical Reasoning in MS Rehabilitation - J. Freeman, University of Plymouth, United Kingdom.

Abstract

This joint SIG Mood & Cognition and Mobility meeting aims to promote an integrated perspective on rehabilitation. Motor performance, cognitive functioning, and psychological factors continuously interact, yet they are often addressed separately in both research and clinical practice.

In the first phase, several presentations will provide a focused overview, integrating knowledge and clinical experience from both SIGs to establish a shared conceptual framework.

In the second phase, participants will engage in a collaborative practical activity centered on the interplay between cognitive and motor processes, explicitly incorporating mobility, cognition, and motivational dimensions.

The session will culminate in the co-development of core principles for a multidimensional cognitive-motor rehabilitation protocol. Rather than defining a rigid model, the objective is to identify shared elements that can guide integrated assessment, treatment planning, and future research.

Each group will briefly present its key take-home messages (one slide per group), followed by a final synthesis highlighting the added value of cross-SIG collaboration and integrated rehabilitation approaches.

Special Interest Group Occupation

Title

Enhancing activity and participation for persons with MS

Chairs

Inger Loyning & Sofie Ferdinand

Keynotes

Update on the OT4MS project (previously OTiMS-project) - Daphne Kos

Development of a definitive clinical trial in cognitive rehabilitation in multiple sclerosis: COB-MS - Sinéad Hynes

Positioning Together: A Vision-Driven, Interprofessional Approach to Seating and Lying - Sofie Ferdinand

Abstract

During the SIG Occupation meeting you will meet and connect with fellow colleagues. In a survey sent out to SIG Occupation members last year, networking with others was ranked highest as reason for participating to our SIG-meetings. Another high-ranked reason for participating was that the SIG-meeting is where you access research and clinical work relevant to your clinical practice.

At this meeting, you will get the latest update on evidencebased occupational therapy for MS, learn about an ongoing randomised controlled trial on Cognitive-Occupational-based rehabilitation program in Ireland and hear about a multidisciplinary team guideline for wheelchair- and bed-positioning for persons with MS.

Special Interest Group Communication and Swallowing

Title

Dysphagia Management in Clinical Settings: Education, Research, and Collaboration

Chairs

Martha Ghijselings & Cristina Ustrell Garrido

Keynotes

Speech Therapy: Clinical Practice at CEMCAT - Cristina Ustrell Garrido

Dysphagia management and caregiver adherence to swallowing recommendations in a Multiple Scleroris rehabilitation center - Martha Ghijselings and Ines Robberechts

Abstract

This year, our SIG will focus on dysphagia, with particular attention to caregiver education, clinical practice, and long-term compliance with recommendations. As a small group, we will begin by reconnecting and introducing our respective centers and areas of expertise. You will learn from practical examples, such as caregiver workshops on safe food preparation for people with dysphagia and research on caregivers' compliance with dysphagia guidelines in a rehabilitation setting. These shared experiences will provide concrete insights and ideas that you can apply in your own professional context. Although this year's theme is dysphagia, our SIG is not limited to one domain. In future editions, topics may include speech, language, voice, breathing, or other related areas within our field.

You should attend if you are looking for an interactive and supportive space to exchange expertise, gain practical knowledge, and actively shape the direction of our SIG. Together, we aim to build a dynamic network that evolves according to the interests and needs of its members.

Special Interest Group Bladder, Bowel and Sexuality

Title

Sexual Wellbeing Reimagined: Evidence,Trends, and Lessons from the SIG in Denmark

Chairs

Corinne Oosterlinck and Edyta Matusik

Keynotes

Menopause and MS: a dual impact - Ellen Van Moer

Abstract

We will offer an overview of how the sexualities and intimate lives of adults with physical or motor disabilities living in specialized institutions are perceived, supported, or sometimes restricted. It will address the social, ethical, and political dynamics that shape access to self-determined intimacy and sexuality within highly regulated institutional contexts. Drawing on qualitative approaches from social sciences and sexology, the session will present the main mechanisms that structure intimate life, as well as various avenues for action — such as sexual assistance, sexual citizenship education, or deinstitutionalization — that can help promote more comprehensive affective and sexual inclusion.

Special Interest Group Patient Autonomy

Title

From Autonomy to Empowerment: Shaping the Future of Patient Engagement in Multiple Sclerosis

Chair

Andrea Giordano

Keynotes

Territorial Implementation and Evaluation of a Nurse-Led Expert Patient Programme for People with Multiple Sclerosis: Impact on Knowledge, Empowerment, and Health Indicators - Miguel Ángel Robles Sánchez

Abstract

You will gain an updated overview of the current evidence on patient empowerment in multiple sclerosis and explore how this knowledge can guide the strategic development of the SIG Patient Autonomy. The session will provide insight into ongoing projects such as MoMS and NIPS, clarifying their aims, methodologies, and relevance for clinical practice and research. In addition, you will learn how a structured Patient Expert programme can strengthen autonomy, enhance shared decision-making, and promote meaningful engagement of people with multiple sclerosis within healthcare systems.

This meeting offers a unique opportunity to contribute to the future direction of the SIG Patient Autonomy while engaging with colleagues who are committed to advancing patient-centred care. By attending, you will position yourself within an active network focused on empowerment, discover potential avenues for collaboration, and gather practical ideas that can be translated into your own clinical, research, or advocacy activities.

Abstract reviewers

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