

In A Nutshell

January 2021



The Year 2020 in Review

The National MS Society ("NMSS") shared highlights of 2020.

### **Stop MS:**

Promising biomarkers to predict an individual's disease course and progression and guide treatment decisions are advancing.

Results confirm that early and ongoing treatment with a disease-modifying therapy has long-term benefits for controlling disease activity, delaying disability, and protecting quality of life.

Three treatments with the potential to stop all forms of MS progression are moving to phase 3 trials. The treatments inhibit target cells that are involved in the immune system and there is even evidence to show that may even promote myelin repair.

### **Restore Function:**

Advances in understanding the complex biological mechanisms of myelin repair, and how to promote repair when it stalls, including transplanting stem cells to promote repair.

2018 Barancik Prize winner Dr. Robin Franklin at the University of Cambridge identified that the brain stiffens with age, which can inhibit the body's ability to repair itself. He is studying a way to manipulate cells to fail to recognize this stiffness, in order get myelin repair back on track.

### **End MS:**

Advances in better understanding risk factors, such as genetics, childhood obesity, exposure to Epstein-Barr virus, low vitamin D, and smoking and how they may trigger immune system malfunctions that lead to MS in order to better predict its onset.

In her keynote talk, Dr. Helen Tremlett at the University of British Columbia discussed the "MS Prodrome", the phase before classic MS symptoms occur, and how there might be a future where we can diagnose and treat people in this phase before any onset or progression.

In 2020 over 5,700 healthcare providers participated in professional education programs hosted by the Society, thereby ensuring that people with MS have increased access to knowledgeable healthcare providers.

The NMSS is using the Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) model to link expert teams of MS specialists with community healthcare providers. This tele-learning and mentoring program, deemed ECHO MS, uses interactive video conferencing to create opportunities for presentations, mentorship and discussion of patient cases that have been proven to improve knowledge and confidence- and bring expertise to people with MS so they will have a better chance of getting an accurate diagnosis sooner, accessing high-quality MS care and affording their MS medications.

NMSS's Executive Vice President of Research, Dr. Bruce Bebo, reported "MS research progress hasn't stopped because of COVID-19. There are advances in the development of new insights into MS, progress in the development of new therapies, and learnings from the application of current therapies. All of these things are helping to improve the outcomes for people living with all forms of MS."

[Winter 2020 | National Multiple Sclerosis Society \(nationalmssociety.org\)](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/winter-2020)

Just for Fun

Check out this many paged article with numerous links that will give you insight into the research progress that was reported at this last year's Virtual Conference.

MS research progress hasn't stopped because of the pandemic. There have been results from recent clinical trials, research on myelin repair, gut bacteria, and racial/ethnic disparities.

Of particular interest are the trials for Masitinib which will target those with primary progressive or "non-active" secondary progressive MS.

[UPDATE World's Largest MS Research Conference Goes Virtual to Share Research Progress | National Multiple Sclerosis Society \(nationalmssociety.org\)](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/worlds-largest-ms-research-conference-goes-virtual)