

Multidisciplinary care

What you should know

- Multidisciplinary care helps you live better, and may help you to live longer, with MND.
- Research has shown that the health professionals you consult can give you better care and advice when they are knowledgeable about MND and have a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to your care.
- Multidisciplinary care occurs when health professionals, from different disciplines, work together to address as many of your health and other needs as possible.
- Multidisciplinary care is available:
 - at several MND-specific clinics in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth
 - in the community.

About multidisciplinary care

In Australia coordination of care is difficult because of service boundaries, distance, funding and health sector accountability to different levels of government (Powell Davies et al 2006). It can be very hard for people with complex disorders, including progressive neurological diseases, to get timely access to care and services that meet their needs.

Multidisciplinary care is delivered by professionals from a range of disciplines who work together to address as many of a person's health and other needs as possible (Mitchell et al 2008).

Each discipline-specific team member enriches the knowledge of the team as a whole. Over time, the multidisciplinary team composition can change to reflect changes in the person's needs (Mitchell et al 2008).

Multidisciplinary care and MND

People living with motor neurone disease are likely to need advice about mobility, communication, breathing, nutrition, managing other symptoms and getting community support.

Importantly though, how you manage some of your earlier symptoms can affect how other, later-developing, symptoms can be managed. However, many health professionals, such as general practitioners (Al-Chalabi 2006), only see one or two people with motor neurone disease in their working life.

Studies have shown that the health professionals you consult, such as your general practitioner, neurologist, respiratory specialist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech pathologist, dietitian, social worker, palliative care team and others, can give you better care and advice when they are knowledgeable about motor neurone disease and have a coordinated, multidisciplinary team approach to your care (Traynor et al 2003, Van den Berg et al 2005). Multidisciplinary care helps you live better, and may help you to live longer, with motor neurone disease (Ng et al 2009).

Multidisciplinary care can provide people living with motor neurone disease:

- flexible, coordinated professional support
- referral to professionals in a coordinated way, so that any difficulties can be dealt with promptly
- regular review of symptoms
- opportunities to get specialised advice from other health and community care professionals and providers.

Importantly, multidisciplinary care provides you with a direct link to one person, who is a member of the team, usually referred to as a key worker, case manager, care coordinator or team coordinator. This person can advise you about regular review of symptoms and coordinates your care.

Getting multidisciplinary care

Multidisciplinary MND clinics

Multidisciplinary care is available at several MND-specific clinics in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. Teams at MND clinics are knowledgeable about motor neurone disease and provide a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to the care of people with the disease. An important aspect of MND clinic multidisciplinary care may be the links from an MND clinic to your local primary health care team or local palliative care team (Zoccolella 2007).

Your MND Association can provide you with contact details for multidisciplinary MND clinics.

General multidisciplinary care

Many people live too far from an MND clinic to attend or may live outside the MND clinic's area. If this is your situation, your multidisciplinary care can be provided by a local primary health care team.

A primary health care team includes local health and community care professionals who provide a range of expertise, advice and support. Your primary health care team can liaise with your neurologist and your MND clinic, if you are attending one.

For people with motor neurone disease, a primary health care team usually includes a general practitioner, nurse, allied health professionals (such as a dietitian, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, social worker and speech pathologist) and local palliative and community care workers. Other team members who have particular expertise are involved as needed, such as a respiratory specialist and palliative care specialist. In many areas of Australia, the regional/care advisor from your MND Association liaises with the team, assisting you and the team to get information, support and referrals to other services when needs change.

Health and community care professionals

For more information about the roles of health and community care professionals working in a multidisciplinary team see the MND Australia fact sheet *Multidisciplinary care team* (EB3).

MND research in this area

There is a need for more well-designed research studies about multidisciplinary care and motor neurone disease (Ng et al 2009).

More information

For more information about multidisciplinary care contact your general practitioner, neurologist, allied health professional, community nurse, local palliative care service, MND clinic or service or your MND Association.

References

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Multidisciplinary care team (EB3)

Riluzole (EB4)

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