

Taking Charge of MS:

Evaluation of Immediate and 3-month Outcomes

from the TAKE CHARGE® Program



THE POWER TO BE MORE THAN YOUR MS

The Need to Live Fully with MS:

The TAKE CHARGE program incorporates MS education, experiential activities, interaction with medical staff and MS experts for PwMS and support partners (SPs) in a small group setting. This hands-on weekend provides participants with an educational model that promotes learning and experience. Participants set goals that will encourage improved overall health and provide opportunities to better manage MS and its challenges.

The individualized course of MS calls for more empowering and person-specific interventions. Taking a positive and optimistic approach to living with MS impacts physical adjustment, healthy coping strategies and influences positive physical health outcomes (de Ridder, 2000; Rasmussen, 2009). TAKE CHARGE goes beyond focusing on empowerment by incorporating a health focused orientation of physical activity (PA) and complete wellness with research showing PA can improve quality of life and MS symptoms (Motl & McAuley, 2009). This two day program provides participants with a variety of educational topics while also engaging the whole person through experiential and group activities. The overwhelmingly positive and hands-on orientation of Can Do MS and the TAKE CHARGE Program is unique with the mission of living more fully with MS.

“From TAKE CHARGE, I gained a better understanding of how all the facets of wellness are important to having a good life with MS.”

-TAKE CHARGE Participant



*TAKE CHARGE addresses the whole person with various formats to improve life with MS



TAKE CHARGE participants engaged in learning new skills to live a fuller life with MS.



Program Mission:

- Provide a two-day program incorporating MS education, experiential activities, and interaction with MS experts and others living with MS.
- Participants will gain knowledge, skills, support and confidence to make positive lifestyle changes.
- Participants will find new sources of self-empowerment and improve communication skills.
- Participants will set goals to assist them in finding the power to be more than their MS.

Findings Summary:

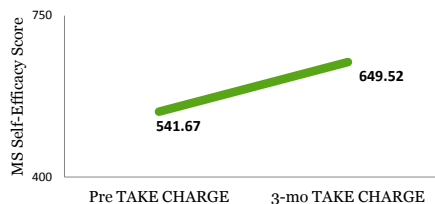
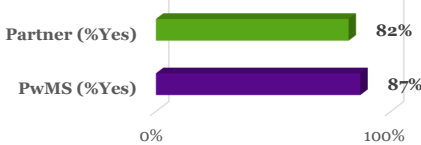
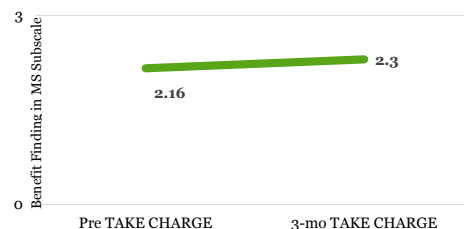
Immediate post TAKE CHARGE:

- PwMS & SPs showed improvement in attitudes of empowerment, relationships with loved ones, hope and overall program satisfaction*.
- PwMS showed improved confidence to better manage MS symptoms and improved MS specific communication*.

3-months post TAKE CHARGE:

- PwMS showed improved confidence to better manage MS symptoms and improvement in finding benefit in living with MS (personal growth*).
- PwMS & SPs used program skills and MS resources, engaged in positive behavior change, and overwhelmingly accomplished goals set during the program.

*statistical analyses run (detailed report available)

Fig. 1: Improved Confidence in MS Symptom Management**Fig. 2: Accomplished short-term goals set during TAKE CHARGE****Fig. 3: Improved Personal Growth**

Longer-Term (3-month) Outcomes:

The TAKE CHARGE® Program is showing longer-term positive results for persons with MS (Fig 1-3). Statistical analyses* found significant changes from before to 3 months after TAKE CHARGE:

- **Increased confidence in MS symptom management***
- **Accomplishment of TAKE CHARGE goals**
- **Increased MS Benefit Finding (i.e., personal growth*)**

*statistical analyses run (detailed report available)

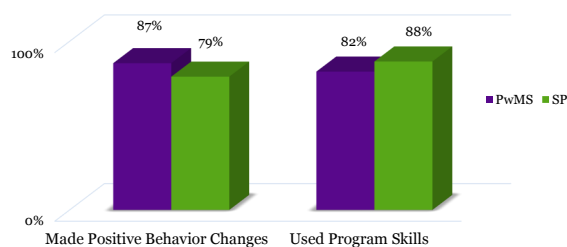
Fig. 4: Behavior & Attitude changes 3-months post TAKE CHARGE

Figure 4: TAKE CHARGE increased positive behaviors (i.e., exercise, nutrition) and participants used program skills to help live a fuller life with MS.

Additional Outcomes:

*The TAKE CHARGE Program produced positive benefits for **Support Partners**:*

- Achievement of short term goals set during TAKE CHARGE (82%)

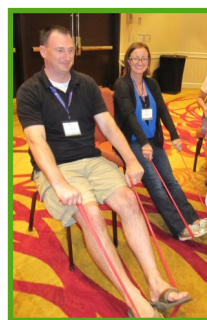
Overwhelming reports of program usage and satisfaction
At 3 months post PwMS & SP showed significant:

- **Increased empowerment and hope**
- **Improved relationship with loved ones**
- **Gained information and skills related to living better with MS**

How did TAKE CHARGE impact lives?

- *“I now deal with issues as they arise and find something good about each day.”*
- *“I am more assertive in requesting referrals from my doctors; I have been more open with my spouse.”*
- *“I have added new exercises to my routine.”*
- *“I remember the need for better communication and reflect on the support partner sessions.”*
- *“I have practiced “letting go” a little bit more as I watch out for the safety of my partner.”*

*TAKE CHARGE PwMS and SPs learning together.



*TAKE CHARGE participants engaged in experiential activities.

Conclusions: The TAKE CHARGE Program is an effective model promoting education and positive experiences to increase confidence to transform challenges into possibilities. TAKE CHARGE produced outcomes of confidence in MS management and benefit finding at 3 months with reports of empowerment and positive behavior changes in all participants. Confidence in living with MS is linked to quality of life (Farrell et al., 2004), and may translate to improved management of MS symptoms. Improved benefit finding is related to meaning-based coping strategies with direct effects on life satisfaction (Pakenham, 2006). Additionally, improvements in positive constructs and optimism may lead to better medication adherence, less morbidity and increased longevity (e.g., Cuffee et al., 2012; Moskowitz et al., 2008).

As disease characteristics and clinical symptoms vary widely, interventions tailored to individuals' which provide an empowering approach are needed. Can Do MS takes a whole person, whole health, whole community approach to MS by providing people with MS and their support partners with lifestyle empowerment programs. The TAKE CHARGE Program effectively teaches individualized skills and facilitates the mindset to take charge of one's whole health to live more fully with MS.