

# Taking Charge of MS:

## Evaluation of Immediate and 3-month Post 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 MS experts for people with MS (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). The program 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.

*"TAKE CHARGE has given me extra motivation to 'keep going' when my MS is 'active'."*

-TAKE CHARGE Program Participant



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



The most frequently expressed words when participants described how they used the TAKE CHARGE Program.



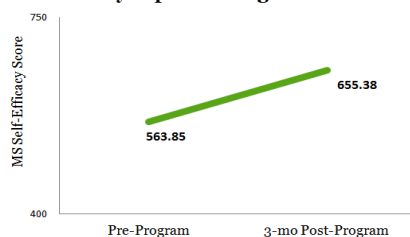
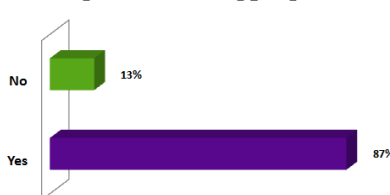
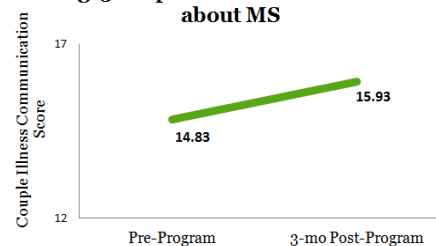
### Program Mission:

- 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:

- At 3-months after the TAKE CHARGE Program, PwMS showed improved confidence to better manage MS symptoms and improved MS specific communication\*.
- At immediate post the TAKE CHARGE Program, PwMS & SPs showed improvement in attitudes of empowerment, relationships with loved ones, hope and overall program satisfaction\*.
- At 3-months post the TAKE CHARGE Program, 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 program****Fig. 3: Improved Communication about MS**

### **Longer-Term (3-month Post-Program) 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 the TAKE CHARGE Program:

- **Increased confidence in MS symptom management\***
- **Increased ability to communicate about living with MS to others\***
- **Accomplishment of the TAKE CHARGE Program goals**

\*statistical analyses run (detailed report available); data collection is ongoing

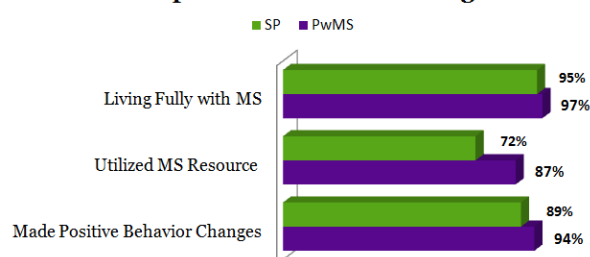
**Fig. 4: Behavior & Attitude Changes 3-months post TAKE CHARGE Program**

Figure 4: The TAKE CHARGE Program increased positive attitudes and behavior (i.e., exercise, nutrition), resulting in living a fuller life with MS and utilizing a new MS resource.

### **Additional Outcomes:**

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

- Achievement of short term goals set during the program (89%).
- Overwhelming reports of program usage and satisfaction.

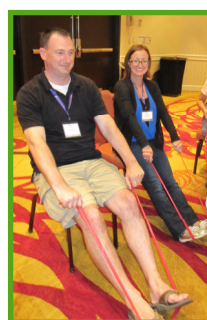
*At immediate post PwMS & SP showed significant:*

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

### **How did the program impact lives?**

- "I now have a more positive attitude about dealing with MS."
- "I have become more aware and communicative of when I do and don't need help."
- "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, increasing confidence to transform challenges into possibilities. The program produced outcomes of confidence in MS management and MS specific communication at 3-months with reports of empowerment and positive behavior changes in all participants. Confidence in MS management is linked to quality of life (Farrell et al., 2004), and this may translate to improved management of MS symptoms. Additionally, improvements in positive constructs and optimism may lead to better medication adherence, less morbidity and increased longevity in healthy and chronically ill populations (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.