Webinar Series

Striving for Cognitive Wellness

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Presented by:

Biogen
Bristol-Myers Squibb
EMD Serono
Novartis
Sanofi Genzyme
Genentech
How to Ask Questions During the Webinar:

• Type in your question in the Q & A pod
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Webinar Learning Objectives

• Explain the common cognitive changes that occur in MS.
• Recognize the impact of these changes on relationships, employment and communication.
• Explore and provide practical strategies to improve mood and everyday cognitive functioning.
COGNITION: What is it?

Higher level brain function

How you think about how and what you think
COGNITION: What is it?

How you....

• Understand & Use Language
• Sustain/Shift Attention & Multi-task
• Learn & Remember New Information
• Plan and Perform Complex Tasks
• Solve Problems & Monitor Behavior
Cognitive Changes & Other Disease Characteristics

At least 65% of people with MS will experience a change in cognition
Cognitive Changes & Other Disease Characteristics

Cognitive Changes...
• Can occur at any point in the disease course - even as a first symptom
• Unrelated to disability level, but occur more often in those with progressive disease
• Is most correlated with brain tissue loss (atrophy)
Cognitive Changes & Other Disease Characteristics

Cognitive Changes have a Significant Impact On...

- Self-esteem & self-confidence
- Employment (common cause of early departure from the workforce)
- Household activities
- Relationships
- Communication
How Many of You Have....

**Grief**
Found it difficult to think clearly after the death of a loved one.

**Anxiety**
Couldn’t think of something simple, like a word or simple math, when put on the spot?
Cognitive Dysfunction

- Exercise & Diet
- Good MS & Medical Care
- Social Interaction
- Mood & Anxiety
- Sleep
Hearing From Someone with MS

Susan, 45yo woman with RRMS

“I used to write, be creative, I picked up on everyone else’s mistakes at work. Now I have no brain. No creative thoughts. I’m not the person I used to be. When people talk to me I don’t always get it; I need them to repeat things. I wish you knew the person I used to be.”
Depression & Cognition

Up to 50% of MS patients will experience depression
More common in MS than other chronic illnesses & general population
Depression can cause or exacerbate cognitive dysfunction
Depression: Treatment Options

Medications

Work with a Psychologist or Therapist:
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
Depression: At Home Strategies

- Give yourself time to grieve
  - 20 minutes once per day
  - 5 minutes each time a thought appears
- Track your thoughts about cognition
- Talk to yourself like you would talk to a friend
- Name your top 3 strengths
- Gratitude Practice: Try the 5 Minute Journal
Hearing From Someone with MS

Dave, 60yo man with SPMS

“I don’t enjoy parties or social gatherings anymore. I get anxious. I worry I won’t be able to get my point across, that people will notice I can’t get my words out. I worry that I’m not only isolating myself, but also my wife.”
Anxiety disorders are 3x greater in MS than the general population.

Anxiety can exacerbate cognitive dysfunction, specifically processing speed.

3x

Brain graphic
Anxiety & Cognition

HR >100 beats per minute

↓ pre-frontal cortex

Problem solving diminishes
Anxiety: Treatment Options

Psychologist/Therapist
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Exposure Therapy

Self-Care
- Exercise
Anxiety: At Home Strategies

• Take a 20 min break
• Deep breathing / relaxation
• Mindfulness
• Monitor your thoughts: Watch them pass through
Polling Question

Which of these anxiety strategies do you want to try after this webinar? (check all that apply)

• Take a 20 min break
• Deep breathing / relaxation
• Mindfulness
• Monitor your thoughts: Watch them pass through
Attention/Processing

Speed and capacity can be affected.

Often able to do things done previously, but not as quickly
Attention/Processing

• I feel like I’m “a day late and a dollar short.” Overwhelmed when information comes too fast or from many directions
• I feel like comprehension or a response comes too late
• I have trouble keeping up and responding quickly
• I have trouble with tasks that have time constraints
• I can’t multitask anymore
Attention/Processing Strategies

Try to modify the environment to make information easier to process and attend to:

- Ask speaker to slow down
- Limit multitasking! It’s overrated
- Change a task from simultaneous to sequential or alternating-
- One thing at a time instead of all at once
- Move to a quieter, less distracting place
- Request a break of overloaded. Breaks are mental/physical and restore calm and renew energy
Attention/Processing Strategies

Repeat and verify in conversation to:

• Verify what you heard is correct
• Hear it again
• Buy time
Attention/Processing Strategies

E-mail, text messages are records of conversations and information that can be referred to again, removing the pressure of having to process and recall what you heard.

Write while listening to make it a more active process.
Verbal Fluency / Word Retrieval

• These functions are most likely associated with slowed processing speed, distractibility and/or trouble retrieving the word from where it is stored.
• Confrontation naming is rarely affected
• True aphasia rare
Verbal Fluency/Work Retrieval

• I feel like the right word is on the “tip of my tongue!”
• I get frustrated, give up, and withdraw from conversations
• I trip up on words that are more specific, descriptive, or meaningful (e.g. “locomotive” vs. “train”)
• I find myself talking around a word (circumlocution)
HEY EVERYBODY, LOOK OUT! IT'S ONE OF THOSE...
UM... YOU KNOW... UHH, WITH THE FIRE AND STUFF...

DESPITE ITS NAME, THE THESAURUS WAS QUITE OFTEN AT A LOSS FOR WORDS.
Word Retrieval Strategies

• Use gesture, pantomime- often cues the word, but can be used to communicate idea without words
• Writing/drawing- with pen or pencil or finger
• Find a synonym; use an antonym (“it’s not a ____”)
• Talk around the word-describe attributes, function, etc.
• Use the first letter of the word (“starts with a ____”)
• Think of the category the word belongs to (“African animal” for “lion”)
Polling Question

When you are having trouble thinking of the right word at the right time which strategy would you find most useful?

• Use gesture or pantomime
• Writing/drawing - with pen or pencil or finger
• Find a synonym; use an antonym
• Talk around the word-describe attributes, function, etc.
• Use the first letter of the word
• Think of the category the word belongs to
Memory

Previously thought to be trouble with retrieving stored memories, but trouble lies with learning or acquisition of new information.

Sometimes the problem is with attention and processing speed/capacity rather than memory.
Memory

- I have trouble learning or recalling new information
- I misplace things
- I forget conversations or dialogue
- I forget appointments
- I forget why I entered a room
Memory Strategies

Combine all senses to help store what needs to be recalled later:

• See it, Say it, Hear it, Write it, Do it
• “Show Me….” “Is this Right?” “Let me Practice it.” “Please Write it Down.”
Memory Strategies

• Impaired attention and slowed processing play a large role You can’t remember what you couldn’t attend to or process in the first place
• “Say it Again, Please.”“A Little Slower.”“One Thing at a Time.”“Can we Talk in a Quieter Place?”“I Need a Short Break”
• Small changes can yield BIG benefits. Functional memory can often be improved with better organization strategies
Executive Functioning

- Difficulty planning and prioritizing
- Trouble organizing and managing time
- Inability to get started on a project
- Trouble self-monitoring emotions or modifying behavior in response to changing situations
- Difficulty maintaining topic
Executive Functioning

• I feel overwhelmed by large work or home projects
• I miss deadlines, lose track of bills and pay them late
• I get lost when trying to tell a story
• I find myself saying the wrong thing at the wrong time
Executive Function/Memory Strategies

• Consolidate and centralize! Designate one place in your home as the “Grand Central” information center.

• Make a place for mail, bills, phone messages, to-do lists, keys, wallet, shopping lists, and more.

• Put up a calendar large enough to keep track of everyone’s appointments, activities, and social engagements, with pens or markers hanging right beside it.

• Make sure information on main calendar is also on portable calendar, be it day planner or cellphone
What Not to Do...

How to Improve Your Memory Seminar

I forgot where I put a sticky note I wrote on to remind me to get something I need to remember.

Remember to buy more sticky notes!
Be Aware of Fatigue

• Prioritize parts of a task: Do highest priority first and when less likely to be fatigued.
• Schedule time each day to attack large, overwhelming projects
• Put a time limit (e.g. 15 minutes) on a task, then take a break
• Limit visual and auditory distractions
• Don’t try to push through cognitive or physical fatigue. Try to maintain consistency of energy
And about those brain games…

There is, “little evidence that playing brain games improves underlying broad cognitive abilities, or that it enables one to better navigate a complex realm of everyday life,” according to a joint statement released by the Stanford Center for Longevity and Max Planck Institute of Human Development on 10/20/2014.
When to Get Help

• Difficulty finding the right words
• Trouble remembering what to do on the job or during daily routines at home
• Difficulty making decisions or showing poor judgment
• Difficulty keeping up with tasks or conversations
• Mild symptoms can have a big impact on ADL’s
• People with MS leave the workforce because of cognitive and fatigue issues more than for mobility issues
How to Get Help

• Speak to your physician about your concerns
• Think about what problems you are having in terms of function. For example, if you have memory problems, do they manifest themselves in forgetting conversations? Forgetting appointments? Forgetting words?
• Depression has a significant effect on cognition. Treating your mental health can improve your cognitive health as well.
Key Take-Aways

• Mood and cognitive changes are common over the disease course
  • Being on alert & reporting to your healthcare provider will help ensure prompt assessment/treatment
• Individually and together, mood and cognitive changes impact daily life
  • Self-image, relationships, performance, quality of life
• Mood and cognitive symptoms are among the most difficult for support partners to understand
• Depression is one of the most treatable symptoms of MS
Key Take-Aways

- **Compensatory strategies** can improve function
  - Giving yourself permission to do things differently is the key to success
- Your support system and healthcare team can help -- there is no need to tackle these issues alone
Q&A
Programs

IN-PERSON

CAN DO® (Four Day)
TAKE CHARGE® (Two Day)
JUMPSTART® (One Day)

ONLINE

Webinar Series (Monthly)
Can Do On Demand
Ask the Can Do Team (Q&A)
Library Articles
National MS Society Resources

The National MS Society exists because there are people with MS. Our vision is a world free of MS. Everything we do is focused so that people affected by MS can live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what has been lost and end MS forever.

Connect
When and Where You Need Us

MS Navigator
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**Can Do MS**
www.cando-ms.org/donate

Or to our supporting partner:

**NMSS**
www.nationalmssociety.org/donate

Please Complete Surveys
MS Awareness Month: Celebrating Support Partners

We’re working with other MS groups and Biogen to mark the fifth year of celebrating the unsung heroes who support the community.

Join the Conversation!

Show appreciation for your support heroes on social media using #MySupportHero

Visit AboveMS.com for more details

Note: Biogen is not involved with content management of #MySupportHero on Can Do MS’s website and social media pages.
MS Path 2 Care
An initiative to empower people affected by MS to be active partners in their healthcare experience.

Visit www.MSPath2Care.com to learn more about the importance of shared decision making in MS care, and to hear important tips directly from people living with MS, their support partners, and MS specialists.

MS Path 2 Care is brought to you in partnership with:

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