

TAKING CHARGE OF MS

Evaluation of the TAKE CHARGE® Program



THE NEED TO LIVE FULLY WITH MS

The TAKE CHARGE program incorporates MS education, experiential activities, interaction with medical staff 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 (e.g., Simpson et al., 2014). TAKE CHARGE goes beyond concentrating on empowerment by incorporating a health-focused orientation of physical activity and complete wellness with research showing physical activity can improve quality of life and MS symptoms (e.g., Motl & McAuley, 2014). 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.



"I learned information on depression, diet, bladder, and home modification."

- TAKE CHARGE Program Participant

CURRENT SURVEY

- There were 2 TAKE CHARGE Programs in 2016 with 154 people served across the country.
- 59 PwMS & 54 SPs completed retrospective pre and post program surveys.
- Average age: PwMS 50 years, SP 56 years; Gender: PwMS 81% Women, SP 41% Women; Average length of MS: 13 years
- Also reported: 3-month follow-up surveys collected from 2015

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a two-day program incorporating MS education, experiential activities, 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

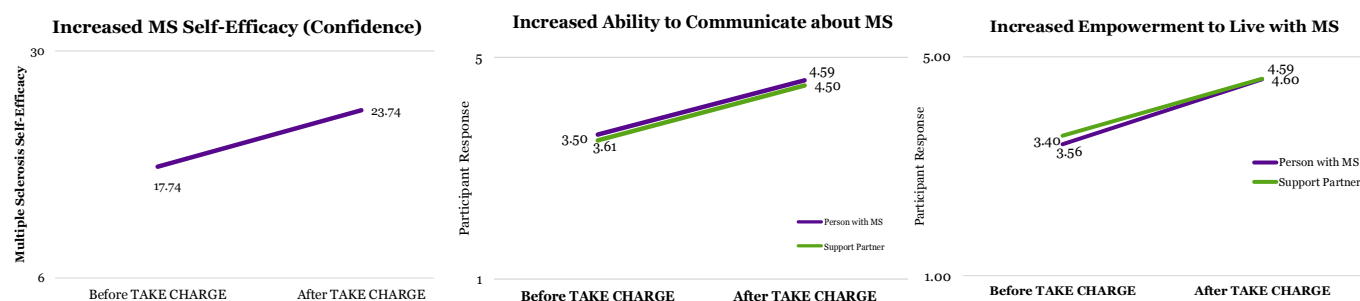
- 89% of PwMS reported improved confidence to better manage MS symptoms*.
- 100% of PwMS and SPs reported intention to make positive lifestyle behavior changes after TAKE CHARGE*
- PwMS & SPs reported increased feelings of empowerment, MS specific communication, social support and knowledge*.
- PwMS & SPs reported overwhelmingly high levels of program satisfaction and gaining of knowledge, skills and resources.
- **Previous research:**
 - PwMS showed improved confidence to better manage MS symptoms and had increased benefit finding in living with MS (personal growth), 3-month after TAKE CHARGE*.

**statistical analyses run, significant improvement was found ($p < .05$).*

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

- **Increased confidence in living with MS*** (better confidence living with MS, higher scores are associated with better mental and physical health, less stress, less pain, fewer sleep problems, and lower depressive symptoms; Amtmann et al., 2012).
- **Increased knowledge, communication and empowerment to better live with MS***
- **Overwhelming program satisfaction and positive behavior change intentions**

*statistical analyses run, significant improvement was found ($p < .05$)



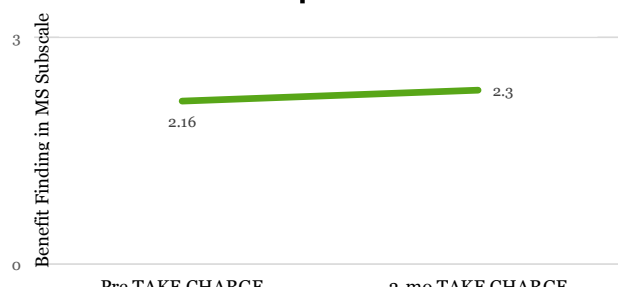
LONGER-TERM IMPACT

TAKE CHARGE participants showed additional 3-month outcomes (2015):

- **Increased MS benefit finding** (i.e., personal growth; BFiMSS—Pakenham & Cox, 2009)*
- **Increased confidence in living with MS** (i.e., MS Self-Efficacy—Schwartz et al., 1996)*
- **Positive behavior change (87%) and usage of program skills at 3-months (82%)**
- **Accomplishment of TC Goals at 3-months (87%)**

*statistical analyses run (detailed report available)

Increased personal growth at 3-months post TAKE CHARGE



CONCLUSIONS

The TAKE CHARGE® Program is an effective model promoting education and positive experiences to increase confidence to transform challenges into possibilities. TAKE CHARGE resulted in immediate outcomes of increased confidence in the management of MS symptoms, knowledge, communication, social support and empowerment. Previous findings support longer-term outcomes such as benefit finding and confidence in MS management at 3-month post. Confidence in MS is linked to quality of life and fewer depressive symptoms (Farrell et al., 2004; Amtmann et al., 2012), and may translate to improved management of MS. Both PwMS and SPs also reported an intention to make positive behavior changes. Implications of increasing positive constructs are better medication adherence, less morbidity and increased longevity for both the person with MS and their support partners (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.



"I gained another group or family to lean on through this MS journey."

- TAKE CHARGE Program Participant

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