

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/neurofrontiers/collaborative-ms-care-strategies-for-empowering-patients-and-supporting-brain-health/32802/>

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Collaborative MS Care: Strategies for Empowering Patients and Supporting Brain Health

Announcer:

You're listening to *NeuroFrontiers* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll hear from Dr. Mary Rensel, who's an Associate Professor of Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine and the Director of Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis and Wellness at the Mellen Center of the Cleveland Clinic. She'll be sharing key takeaways from her session at the 2025 Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers Annual Meeting, which focused on the interdisciplinary approach to wellness in multiple sclerosis care. Here's Dr. Rensel now.

Dr. Rensel:

I have been treating multiple sclerosis for over 30 years, and I've had the honor to get to know so many people living with multiple sclerosis and their families and friends who care about them. And at the center that I work at—the Mellen Center of the Cleveland Clinic—from the very first days, it has been interdisciplinary, meaning that we all take part in helping to support the person living with MS and their family. So that to us means nursing, doctors, physical therapists, speech therapists, psychologist, neuropsychologist, and occupational therapist. We all work together and take a piece of providing solutions for the patients and their families. So from the beginning, that has been the way the Mellen Center is set up, and when we present at meetings nationally about it, people are like, "How do you actually do it? How is it actually done boots on the ground? How does this happen?"

And for the folks living with MS and the people supporting them, small day-to-day actions matter, and that's where our occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, physical therapists, advanced practice nurses, and our doctors reinforce how empowered our patients are day-to-day to make those small decisions that actually can really support their long-term brain health. There's a term we call "brain reserve," and that's almost like a savings account. The little actions we take every day can help the brain structure. If you think of it like a garden, how do you support it to grow and stay healthy and fertilize it for the long run so it produces for us? When multiple sclerosis is already affecting the brain tissue, we want to do everything we can to support the brain and spinal cord, which are the structures that are affected by MS. So we give folks boots on the ground little actions that have long-term benefits for them.

Let's say the occupational therapists help the patients with their energy management. Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of those living with MS, so they help. Our physical therapists are really great at helping people with balance, with endurance, and with building their strength because you can get stronger even when you're living with something like multiple sclerosis. And our speech therapists can help with swallowing problems, thinking problems, memory problems, and even breathing issues. So we all come together to support the patient depending on what symptoms they're dealing with. And really the key to wellness is prevention so that we address the mental, the physical, and the social health of our patients. And if there's any challenges in those areas, that's when we share them with our therapists. And then our therapists loop them back to the medical team. So that's what we like to talk about in this presentation—the power of looping, the power of taking a village to support the patients. There are so many of us that can use our own skills to support the patient and then share them again back to the medical team and back to the therapist so that we can keep chipping away, supporting the patient, and breaking down barriers that are making it hard to get these small actions that can have long-term consequences for their well-being done.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Mary Rensel talking about her session at the 2025 Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers Annual Meeting, which focused on the interdisciplinary approach to wellness in multiple sclerosis. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *NeuroFrontiers* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!