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Neuroscience

MS GLOSSARY

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Annualized Relapse Rate (ARR)

The average annual number of multiple sclerosis (MS) relapses.

Atrophy

A wasting away or decrease in size of a cell, tissue, or organ of the body, including the brain, because of disease or lack of use.

Clinically Isolated Syndrome (CIS)

A first neurologic event that is suggestive of demyelination, accompanied by multiple lesions on a MRI that are typical of MS.

Demyelination

A loss of myelin in the white matter of the central nervous system (e.g. brain, spinal cord).

Exacerbation

The appearance of new symptoms or the aggravation of old ones, lasting at least twenty-four hours (synonymous with attack, relapse, flare-up or worsening).

Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS)

A part of the Minimal Record of Disability that summarizes the neurologic examination and provides a measure of overall disability.

Expanded Disability Status Scale Continued—

The EDSS is a 10-point scale, ranging from 0 (normal examination) to 10 (death due to MS) by half-points. A person with a score of 4.5 can walk three blocks without stopping; a score of 6.0 means that a cane or a leg brace is needed to walk one block; a score over 7.5 indicates that a person cannot take more than a few steps, even with crutches or help from another person. The EDSS is used for many reasons, including deciding future medical treatment, establishing rehabilitation goals, choosing subjects for participation in clinical trials and measuring treatment outcomes. This is currently the most widely used scale in clinical trials.

Immunosuppressant

A medication that suppresses a person's immune system.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

A diagnostic procedure that produces visual images of different body parts without the use of X-rays. Nuclei of atoms are influenced by a high frequency electromagnetic impulse inside a strong magnetic field. The nuclei then give off resonating signals that can produce pictures of parts of the body. An important diagnostic tool in MS, MRI makes it possible to visualize and count lesions in the white matter of the brain and spinal cord.



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Myelin

A soft, white coating of nerve fibers in the central nervous system, composed of lipids (fats) and protein. It serves as insulation and as an aid to efficient nerve fiber conduction.

Neurologist

A physician who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of conditions related to the nervous system.

Optic Neuritis

An inflammation of the optic nerve, the bundle of nerve fibers that transmit visual information to your brain from your eye. Pain and temporary vision loss are common symptoms of optic neuritis.

Primary-Progressive MS (PPMS)

PPMS is a disease course that is characterized by steady worsening of neurologic functioning, without any distinct relapses (also called attacks or exacerbations) or periods of remission. A person's rate of progression may vary over time — with occasional plateaus or temporary improvements — but the progression is continuous.

Pseudo-Exacerbation

A temporary aggravation of disease symptoms, resulting from an elevation in body temperature or other stressor (e.g., an infection, severe fatigue, constipation), that disappears once the stressor is removed.

Relapse

May be defined as an objective, new or significantly worsening neurological deficit that is consistent with inflammation and demyelination (i.e., consistent with MS), lasts for more than 24 hours; is separated by at least 30 days from the onset of the last relapse; is not related to an infection, fever, or other stresses; and has no other explanation.

Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis

A clinical course of MS that is characterized by clearly defined, acute attacks with full or partial recovery.

Remyelination

The repair of damaged myelin.

Sclerosis

Hardening of tissue. In MS, sclerosis is the body's replacement of lost myelin around CNS nerve cells with scar tissue.

Secondary-Progressive MS (SPMS)

SPMS is primarily considered a progressive disease course because it marks the transition from the inflammatory process that occurs in relapsing-remitting MS to a process characterized by gradual destruction and loss of nerve fibers.

T-cell

A lymphocyte (white blood cell) that develops in the bone marrow, matures in the thymus and works as part of the immune system in the body.

*All terms were taken from nationalmssociety.org