

Latest projects at UW's MS research center offer hope

One day, people living with MS might get relief from their fatigue, pain and depression in a new way — over the phone.

A new study called “Take Charge” is one of several projects under way at the MS Rehabilitation and Research Training Center (MSRRTC) at the University of Washington. And the Chapter is lucky to have this unique facility in its backyard.

With a focus solely on MS-related research — much of it supported by more than \$385,000 in grants from the National MS Society — “the center is the only rehabilitation and research center of its kind in the United States,” explains Nicholas LaRocca, PhD, the Society’s vice president of health care delivery and policy research. “In many ways, it is the epicenter of MS rehabilitation science in this country.”

Dawn Ehde, PhD, is a professor at the UW School of Medicine and works with George Kraft, MD; MSRRTC leader Kurt Johnson, PhD; and a number of colleagues to conduct research at the center. She is excited about the potential for the Take Charge project.

“It’s common for people with MS to experience pain, fatigue and depression,” Dawn notes. “Through this study, we’re hoping to find whether delivering self-management techniques over the phone — including education and coping skills — is an effective way of reducing the symptoms and their impact on people’s lives.”

In the study’s first six months, 85 people participated, with 100 more on a waiting list.

“That level of interest in a study really shows us that this kind of care is needed,” Dawn observes. “We’re looking at two different types of treatment approaches to see which is best, but we’re also interested in general how treatment over the phone can work.”

STAFF AT THE MSRRTC ALSO ARE RESEARCHING THESE ISSUES:

- How best to focus on and measure depression in people living with MS, when the symptoms of depression — such as fatigue — often overlap those of MS.
- How to improve employment experiences of people with MS, either those trying to keep their jobs or those re-entering the job market after their MS diagnosis.
- How to make research findings more accessible — or “taking what we know in science and making it more useful to people,” Dawn says.



LEARN MORE about the MSRRTC at msrrtc.washington.edu.