What is MS?
• Multiple sclerosis is a life-long, unpredictable and often disabling disease of the central nervous system.
• It causes unpredictable symptoms ranging from weakness and fatigue to total paralysis, which can wax and wane in a variety of pattern.
• People with MS typically require access to a wide range of medications in order to manage their disease, address varying symptoms, prevent and treat exacerbations, and maintain their quality of life.
• Different people are likely to experience very different symptoms.
• Most people are diagnosed during the prime of life years, ages 20-50.
• Most people with MS do not use a wheelchair.
• MS affects more than 2.3 million people worldwide.
• Three-quarters of the people with MS are women.
• Most people with MS have a normal life expectancy.
• MS is not contagious and is not directly inherited.

The Financial Impact
• $2.3 million per person: the average lifetime cost of having MS.
• The average annual health care cost for someone living with MS in the US is $39,000.
• Among people living with MS who do have health insurance, out of pocket costs for insurance premiums are close to $2,000 per year.
• The higher the out of pocket cost for an MS disease modifying drug, a critical tool in slowing disease progression, the less likely the individual is to actually fill the prescription.
• Median out of pocket costs for health care among those with MS, excluding insurance premiums, was almost twice as much as the general population.
• 70% of those living with MS report difficulty paying for health care.
• Almost all people living with MS have a work history and labor force participation comparable to that of the general population at the time of diagnosis, over time the ability of people with MS to remain in the labor force declines steadily following diagnosis.
• In over one third of cases, people living with MS and their families paid 100% of the cost of mobility aids such as canes, crutches, walkers and wheelchairs.
• People living with MS in rural areas, especially those areas most distant from large population centers, are more likely to have difficulty getting MS care due to lack of money.
• 21% reported spending less on food, heat and other necessities in order to meet health care expenses.