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Top 10 things everyone should know about multiple sclerosis Challenges of living with MS highlighted during MS Awareness Week, March 2-8

1. Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system with no known cause or cure. It means a lifetime of unpredictable and disabling symptoms and can affect people's ability to walk, see or think.
2. In MS, immune cells attack myelin, which insulates nerve fibers and helps them conduct electrical impulses. When myelin or the nerve fiber is destroyed or damaged, the ability of the nerves to conduct messages to and from the brain is disrupted
3. While some people have periodic flare-ups of MS symptoms with few lasting effects, others see their symptoms become progressively more disabling.
4. The disease takes a huge financial toll: the lifetime personal price tag of MS is nearly \$3 million in lost wages, medication costs and more.
5. It's not uncommon for people living with MS to be misdiagnosed. Other diseases sometimes confused with MS are lupus, Lyme disease, sarcoidosis, Devic's disease and neurosyphilis. Recently, a bizarre food poisoning from fish called ciguatera also has been confused with MS.
6. Scientists don't know why people develop MS, but they think there are genetic and environmental components. In the past couple of years, they've made strides on both fronts, identifying genes and factors such as Vitamin D and Epstein-Barr virus that are associated with MS.
7. While there are six medications on the market, and more are on the way, these therapies do not provide a cure, nor do they stop disease progression. All of the current disease-modifying therapies require injections.
8. More than 130 clinical trials are under way around the world, including more than a dozen final-phase trials of new therapies, some taken by mouth.
9. Approximately 400,000 Americans have MS, and every week more than 150 people are diagnosed. The Greater Delaware Valley is home to more than 11,000 people living with MS.
10. Up to four times as many women have MS as men. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50. A small but growing number of diagnoses are being made among children and teens.

MS Awareness Week, held March 2-8, is an outreach effort to increase public awareness of the daily challenges of living with MS. The Greater Delaware Valley Chapter of the National MS Society funds research, programs and services to help families and individuals overcome these challenges through community events such as Walk MS, coming up at 16 sites throughout the region on April 26 and May 3. Learn more at walk4MS.org.