



National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society

# MS Research Funding

**Request:** Please support the following funding levels in fiscal year (FY) 2021:

- \$20 million for the MS Research Program
- \$5 million for the Surveillance System
- \$44.7 billion for the NIH

## Sources of Federal MS Research Funding

### MS Research Program (MSRP) at the Department of Defense

- The MSRP funds high-impact, high-risk projects to fill research gaps based on input from people living with MS.
- Nearly 70,000 American veterans live with MS.<sup>i</sup>
  - Over half of veterans with MS seen by the Veterans Health Administration have MS that is deemed “service-connected”.
- Between 2007-2016, over 2,000 active-duty service members and 600 Reserve/National Guard members were diagnosed with MS.<sup>ii</sup>

### National Neurological Conditions Surveillance System at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Surveillance System):

- Authorized by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act at \$5 million a year, this System will help foster a greater understanding of the health and outcomes for those affected by neurological disorders.
  - CDC is implementing two pilot programs in MS and Parkinson’s disease:
    - The first stage of the pilots will produce national estimates of prevalence and incidence and explore demographic characteristics and disease burden.
    - The second stage will expand the Surveillance System to enable ongoing disease surveillance (pending funding).

### National Institutes of Health (NIH):

- NIH is the country’s premiere biomedical research institution and the largest funder of biomedical research funding in the world.
- All current MS disease modifying therapies (DMTs) are a result of NIH funded basic research.
- NIH estimates that it will fund \$101 million in MS research in FY20.

### What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?

- MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system.
- The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted.
- Nearly 1 million people are living with MS in the United States—more than twice the previously reported number.

### Partnership in MS Research

- The Society sees itself as a strategic partner with federal research agencies to identify research gaps, remove redundancy, maximize complementarity, and leverage research efforts.
- The Society supports research and treatment to stop disease progression, restore function, and end MS forever.
- To date, the Society has funded over \$1.06 billion in MS research.

## Funding MS Research Will End MS

To find a cure for diseases of the brain like multiple sclerosis (MS), Jennifer Orthmann-Murphy, MD, PhD, a clinician researcher and assistant professor of neurology at the University of Pennsylvania, depends on funding from the federal government and partners like the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Inspired initially to study neuroscience because her father lives with MS, Dr. Orthmann-Murphy has already dedicated nearly 20 years to research and clinical care. Her current research focuses on understanding myelin and myelin repair in the grey matter of the brain – a region that experiences deterioration as MS progresses, but the damage cannot be seen on magnetic resonance imaging (MRIs).

Throughout her career and training, Dr. Orthmann-Murphy has received funding from the NIH and the MS Society, both of which have been instrumental to move her research forward and to connect her with peers.

“Asking big questions in research, like how to repair myelin, is not going to be answered by any single research project or funder,” she says. **“It requires funding from multiple sources. Each funding source can contribute to different projects and collaborations among labs with unique expertise, and together, we can find a way to cure MS.”**

Dr. Orthmann-Murphy’s research has a direct impact on the MS community, as success could mean repairing damage caused by MS in people like Garvis Leak.

A decorated combat veteran who served for 26 years in the United States Air Force, Garvis lives with primary-progressive MS. He and thousands of veterans and active military service men and women need solutions now more than ever. An estimated 70,000 veterans live with MS in this country, and over the past decade, more than 2,600 active military service members and National Guard/Reservists were diagnosed with MS. Increased funding for the MSRP, NIH and the Surveillance System can help answer research questions and in turn, provide better care and allow service people to continue their military careers.



“Military service men and women are fighting for our freedom, but I don’t think we always give proper medical attention to health problems that can affect their service,” Garvis says. “This impacts military readiness for current active duty personnel and veterans.”

Garvis is grateful for the MSRP’s research, but he knows the commitment isn’t over until there is a cure, which requires increased research dollars. “We earned it,” he says. **“We didn’t give the ultimate sacrifice, but we sacrifice a lot for our nation.”**

Likewise, research funding is critical for Dr. Orthmann-Murphy. “If fund streams disappear or decrease, I would have to stop doing research. It would be a devastating loss to stop investing in new and daring ideas that may one day lead to fixing the brain.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell T. Wallin, William J. Culpepper, Jonathan D. Campbell, Lorene M. Nelson, Annette Langer-Gould, Ruth Ann Marrie, Gary R. Cutter, Wendy E. Kaye, Laurie Wagner, Helen Tremlett, Stephen L. Buka, Piyameth Dilokthornsakul, Barbara Topol, Lie H. Chen, Nicholas G. LaRocca *Neurology* Mar 2019, 92 (10) e1029-e1040; DOI: 10.1212/WNL.0000000000007035

<sup>ii</sup> Williams VF, Stahlman S, Ying S. 2017. Multiple sclerosis among service members of the active and reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces and among other beneficiaries of the Military Health System, 2007-2016. *MSMR* Aug; 24(8): 2-11.

