

MSWS: Episode 5 –

MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis

On Screen Logo Animation	00:00	MSWS Multiple Sclerosis Work Space MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis
Announcer VO:	00:08	The following podcast is not designed to provide legal or HR advice, but is intended to provide a general overview of the topic. Today's guest is being compensated for their participation.
Mary Schaefer:	00:18	This is Mary Schaefer. I'm a human resources professional focusing on bringing more humanity to the workplace. I'm here with Neil Goldfarb. Neil, can you give us a little background on yourself as we get started?
On-Screen Super:	00:20	Mary Schaefer, SHRM-CP, PHR Speaker, Trainer, Coach, Consultant and Advocate for a ProHuman Workplace
Neil Goldfarb:	00:29	Sure. I'm president of the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health. We're an employer coalition serving employees in Southeastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and Southern New Jersey. And our employers have come together to try to improve the health of the workforce, and to hold the healthcare system accountable for quality, safety and value.
On-Screen Super:	00:29	Via video conference (throughout Neil Goldfarb's on-screen time)
On-Screen Super:	00:32	Neil Goldfarb Health Care Executive, Researcher and Educator President and CEO, Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health
Mary Schaefer:	00:50	Thank you so much and welcome to the podcast today. We're going to talk today about sort of the 101 of MS. And so can you tell us, what is the cause of MS?
Neil Goldfarb:	01:04	Well, we don't know exactly what the cause is. MS is an autoimmune disease where a person's immune system starts to attack their central nervous system. And this leads to communication difficulties between various neurons and the brain. So, it can lead to a physical disability or just difficulty in doing basic body functions. Even some cognitive deficits at times, but we don't really know what the cause of that is.
On-Screen Super:	01:09	MS is an autoimmune disease where the person's immune system starts to attack central nervous system

MSWS: Episode 5 –

MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis

On-Screen Super:	01:21	Multiple Sclerosis disrupts communication between the brain and body
On-Screen Super:	01:33	MS can lead to physical disability and difficulty in basic functions including cognition issues
Mary Schaefer:	01:41	Okay, thank you very much. What is it in term of physical implications for a person diagnosed with MS?
Neil Goldfarb:	01:49	Well, first, MS has different impacts on different people. So some people have more mild forms and other people, it can be very severe. It can result in difficulty walking, difficulty sometimes breathing, eating, swallowing, the ... Just think about anything your nervous system controls, and as your immune system attacks your central nervous system, any of those functions can be impaired in some way.
Mary Schaefer:	02:22	Can you tell me what the number of people diagnosed in the US is, and the average age of onset?
Neil Goldfarb:	02:31	That's a great question Mary. A recent study in the journal Neurology said that close to a million people in the United States have MS. That's a much higher number than what we previously thought about prevalence. MS usually is diagnosed between ages 20 and 50, so the workforce age. But it can affect children, it can affect seniors. It is much more prevalent in females than in males, so those both genders are affected. And also geography plays a role, where people who live further away from the equator seem to have a higher prevalence of MS. That may be related to something about climate or exposure to sunlight.
On-Screen Super:	02:37	According to the publication Neurology, close to 1 million U.S. adults could have Multiple Sclerosis
On-Screen Super:	03:00	MS disproportionately affects working-age adults and women
On-Screen Super:	03:09	MS is most common in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the U.S.
Mary Schaefer:	03:19	What does the fact that it shows up in different people in different ways, what does that mean for optimal treatment?
Neil Goldfarb:	03:27	Yeah, it really is a very complex disease to diagnose and to treat. We strongly recommend as a coalition, when we're talking to

MSWS: Episode 5 –

MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis

employers, that they identify physicians in their market who are really MS specialists. And that they figure out how they can help get employees to seek out care.

On-Screen Super:	03:29	MS is a complex disease to diagnose and to treat
On-Screen Super:	03:38	Employers should identify physicians in their market who are MS specialists so that they can help employees seek out specialized care
Neil Goldfarb:	03:50	So once you have a diagnosis, you should be seeing an MS specialist if at all possible, if geographically possible. But part of the problem is in the diagnosis phase, you may not know you have MS, and your physician may be puzzled by the symptoms you have, and run all sorts of tests before a diagnosis can be established. And the best way to establish a diagnosis is through an MRI, where the damage to the central nervous system can actually be visualized.
On-Screen Super:	04:15	Magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, is best way to make the MS diagnosis
Mary Schaefer:	04:25	And let's talk a little bit more about what employers can do.
Neil Goldfarb:	04:28	Sure. So there is several things that we think are really important for employers to focus on. And I'll say at the outset that employers don't necessarily currently put a lot of focus on MS, because it's not what they're seeing is one of the major diseases in their workforce.
On-Screen Super:	04:41	Most employers don't put much focus on MS today, but there are still things that can be done
Neil Goldfarb:	04:46	So they have to start by recognizing that it may only affect a couple of people in their workforce, but as an employer there is still things they can do to help that person. So the first thing is create a culture in the workplace where it's okay to talk about symptoms, and not feeling well necessarily, or needing some flexibility in the work schedule, or some accommodations. So creating a culture of open communication is a good place to start, where there's not a stigma associated with having the disease.
On-Screen Super:	04:55 05:00	Ways employers can help people with MS 1. Create a culture based on communication and openness
Neil Goldfarb:	05:19	The second thing employers can do is educate the employees, and let them know what resources exist for people who do have MS. So either for the employee or the employee as a caregiver for somebody else who has MS.

MSWS: Episode 5 –

MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis

On-Screen Super:	05:19	2. Educate employees so they're aware of available resources
Neil Goldfarb:	05:35	The third thing that we think employers should do is really pay attention to their benefit designs, particularly pharmacy benefits and some of the pharmacy management tools that they use and that their PBMs use. They made delay necessary care. MS is a debilitating disease, and it's not one of those diseases where you want to mess around with step therapy, and wait for other therapies to fail before going to a more complex, perhaps more expensive therapy.
On-Screen Super:	05:35	3. Pay attention to benefit designs – especially pharmacy/PBM benefits
Neil Goldfarb:	06:07	So we strongly encourage employers to talk to their health plans and PBMs about how they're ensuring that people have, who are diagnosed with MS, have early access to the needed medications. So, there's a shared responsibility for physicians and patients to talk to each other, and to stay in some degree of contact.
On-Screen Super:	06:13	Employers should talk to health plans/PBMs about how employees can gain early access to necessary medications
Neil Goldfarb:	06:28	The final thing that we would suggest is employers should pay attention to where people are getting care. As I mentioned earlier, it's very important for a person who has MS to see an appropriately trained MS specialist, a neurologist who has some expertise. Even if it means seeking out a person who's not around the corner from the patient. Because these physicians really understand the complexity of the disease, the need, appropriate poly-pharmacy, multiple drugs, and can really help to ensure that patients are well managed and get back to a functional level, where they can work as soon as possible.
On-Screen Super:	06:33	Employers should partner with employee with MS to ensure they're able to connect with and be seen by an appropriately trained MS specialist.
Mary Schaefer:	07:10	Thank you. It sounds like there's a lot of collaboration that would be required between a patient and their doctor or medical provider. Tell me more about that joint responsibility.

MSWS: Episode 5 –

MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis

Neil Goldfarb:	07:26	Absolutely. The patient is responsible for letting their physician know when they have symptoms, either new symptoms or exacerbation, advancement of certain symptoms. Patients also need to be responsible for doing what they can and adjusting their lifestyle appropriately. So nutrition is important, physical activity, exercise all can help modify the impact of MS.
On-Screen Super:	07:31	Neil Goldfarb Health Care Executive, Researcher and Educator President and CEO, Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health
On-Screen Super:	07:48	Nutrition and physical activity can help modify the impact of MS
Neil Goldfarb:	07:56	And finally patients need to be responsible for taking their medications as prescribed by their physician. And letting the physician know if they have any concerns about their medication, rather than just stopping taking it without talking to the physician.
Neil Goldfarb:	08:10	The physician also has responsibility for knowing how to monitor a patient, how often to monitor a patient, how to assess adherence, how to treat symptoms and flare ups with MS. It is, as I said, a very complex disease. So, there's a shared responsibility for physicians and patients to talk to each other and to stay in some degree of contact.
Mary Schaefer:	08:36	So Neil, it sounds like employers play a really vital role in supporting their employees with MS. I want to thank you so much for your time that you spent with us today. I've enjoyed the conversation.
Neil Goldfarb:	08:49	Thank you, Mary. I appreciate the time as well.
Announcer 2 VO:	08:51	Thanks for your time today. For those listening, be sure to check out the MS workspace website at ms-workspace.com . There you'll find resources that can provide additional support to employees in your organization, as well as a very unique MS estimator tool, that can help give you a sense of the impact MS may be having on your company right now. So visit that MS workspace website, and thanks again for listening.
On-Screen Animation	08:52	(ms-workspace.com screen shots)
On Screen Logo	09:16	MSWS Multiple Sclerosis Work Space www.ms-workspace.com
On Screen Logo		

MSWS: Episode 5 –

MS 101: Understanding the Basics About Multiple Sclerosis

Animation 09:20 MSWS Multiple Sclerosis Work Space

On-Screen Super 09:30 How many adults in your organization could have MS?
Get your estimate at msestimator.com

© 2020 Bristol-Myers Squibb Company US-CLG-19-1448 04/20