



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

**MS Learn Online
Feature Presentation
Multiple Sclerosis: Past, Present and Future
Featuring Dr. Jock Murray**

Tracey

Hi I'm Tracy Kimball

Tom

And I'm Tom Kimball. Welcome to MS Learn Online.

Tracey

Since my MS diagnosis in 1995 there's been tremendous growth and so many changes in the world of MS. It's exciting and fills me with hope.

Tom

...and me too!! In today's webcast we'll hear how far MS has come in research, treatments and information for those impacted by the disease. MS Learn Online's medical correspondent Rick Somers spoke with neurologist Dr. Jock Murray

Tracey

Dr. Murray begins by reflecting on the progress that's been made in the years that he's been working with people who have MS
Tracey>> Hi I'm Tracy Kimball

Jock Murray: Well I started taking care of MS patients 35 years ago and started an MS Clinic to organize the care and management of MS patients about 30 years ago and during that initial period, of course, we didn't have anything to alter the outcome of the disease. We would provide care, answer questions, assess patients, and be there when they needed someone to talk

about their problems and issues. And so the remarkable thing that's occurred recently is the advent of drugs that do alter the outcome of the disease. And a tremendous amount of basic research is telling us more about what's really going on in this disease.

>>**Rick Somers:** You've seen a lot of changes.

>>**Jock Murray:** A lot of changes.

>>**Rick Somers:** Talk about some of those.

>>**Jock Murray:** They are quite dramatic. The basic science that tells us about what the mechanisms of the disease are is advancing extremely rapidly. There's a lot of researchers ...

>>**Rick Somers:** There's an excitement in your voice as you talk about this.

>>**Jock Murray:** There really is. The other thing that has changed a great deal as a result of all of this is a sense of hope that occurs in the patients and also in their families. That wasn't there before because it was always said to be a disease with no cure, a disease that was untreatable. And now, of course, that's all changed, too.

>>**Rick Somers:** How does that translate to your patients? And you see patients on a regular basis, or just in the clinic. Do you see people privately?

>>**Jock Murray:** Yes. I have a clinic. There's a large clinic, and we have about 3,000 MS patients. But what we do sense is that a change in not only their attitude but also their information.

Patients today are very well informed, and so they know about things that are going on. They do understand. They have very intelligent questions to ask. So, that aspect, actually, is very interesting to patients now. I like to talk to patients about what's happening and what's going on.

So, the sense of hope and the attitude of the patient has changed, and also their information base has changed a great deal.

>>**Rick Somers:** Well, it's interesting, because think about when you first started in this MS world and somebody had said to you 30 years ago, "In 2008, 2009, you're going to be on the Internet talking about MS." What's the Internet? So, we look at how the delivery of information has changed and how people are getting it, and it's readily available.

>>**Jock Murray:** No, it's an entirely different world.

>>**Rick Somers:** Does that worry you at all? I mean, that sometimes there's too much information available? I'm interested because I would like to know, not statistically, but just from patients that you see, how many people come in with questions that are off the wall or misinformation?

>>**Jock Murray:** Not a lot of misinformation. Some do, because they're always looking for things. There's a search still in MS. People are searching for things. So, if they hear that in some strange corner of the world there's a therapy that someone is using, they want to know.

But that kind of thing is not the commonest question. In fact, the commonest question that people bring in, and it's one almost all the patients have, is what's going on? What's going on in research?

>>**Rick Somers:** What's the latest?

>>**Jock Murray:** They just want to hear. And they know that we all communicate now, that people involved in MS get together. There are lots of meetings, we do our papers together, we do our research together. It's an international phenomenon. They just want to know what's happening. So, each time they come in they say, "Well, what's happening now?"

>>**Rick Somers:** I always like to say, because I speak to a lot of newly diagnosed patients, and I say, "If you're going to be diagnosed this is a good time to be diagnosed." We can probably say that about any disease.

>>**Jock Murray:** But that is true in MS. In fact, we've got a lot of research now showing that early diagnosis now in the therapies work better, if people are treated at the earliest possible time. So, it is a changing time for patients. And also the amount of good information, the amount of support that's there,

the number of people who are interested in the disease has remarkably changed over the last three decades.

>>**Rick Somers:** What do you attribute that to, other than the fact that the information is more accessible? There are still people that want to shove it under the rock, but tell me --

>>**Jock Murray:** Well, it's interesting, 30 years ago many patients were not told the diagnosis. And, in fact, many physicians thought it was unkind to give them such a devastating, depressing diagnosis. And so they would often couch the diagnosis in terms that people actually couldn't understand. Or they would tell the family and not tell the patient. It sounds really ridiculous now, but that was a common attitude even in the 1970s. That's changed entirely now. Providing information, having educational programs is a way that most patients get their background and the information.

So, I think that for patients now, this is a good age. There's a lot happening, a lot of promise, and there's a lot of good information to help guide them.

>>**Rick Somers:** Tell me in a Cliff Notes version what you see for the immediate future of MS patients.

>>**Jock Murray:** I think for MS patients in the near future, the things that will have a dramatic change is the early diagnosis, early treatment. That diagnosis will become earlier and treatment will begin earlier. We will see the advent of new therapies, we will see the advent of combination therapies.

You know, it's interesting, we're going to see, I think ...

>>**Rick Somers:** You're very upbeat about the future. I want to just rewind back and ask you what led you to MS? Was it something personal?

>>**Jock Murray:** No. I did a research project in the community because I was told by some of my patients that in their community there was a lot of MS and they thought it was unusual. And so I actually spent a couple of years doing epidemiological studies in Nova Scotia to see if communities had more than they would find. And we published some interesting things about that.

But what I really noticed was, those patients out there in communities felt abandoned, that nobody seemed interested in seeing them. They were given a diagnosis, told there was no treatment, told that within a matter of time they would be in a wheelchair and, as my colleague in New York used to say, "They used to diagnose and adios." And so they felt abandoned. Nobody wanted to see them, there didn't seem to be any information.

And so I set up a clinic, not because I had anything particular to offer except that we cared about them and we would be happy to see them to answer their questions and provide them whatever answers we could.

I still think that one of the most important things is that kind of relationship. And it's a broader relationship, too. It's a relationship with family and caregivers, that they should be brought into this discussion as well. And that relationship tends to be a very positive one, and it's one that I certainly enjoy. And so what used to be thought of as a depressing, negative thing is now actually a very positive thing.

People ask me, "Isn't it a downer to go to work every day and see MS patients all day?" It's always been for me a great joy. They're wonderful people to work with, and all they wanted initially was someone to talk to. Now, we actually have something that we can do that makes a difference.

Tracey

Well, we've certainly seen a difference in the advances of MS therapies, but we still have a ways to go.

Tom

But with all the work being done by Dr. Murray and thousands of other doctors and researchers, we are seeing progress.

Tracey

We'd like to thank Dr. Jock Murray for taking the time to talk to us.

Tom

And we'd like to thank you for joining us, and we invite you to join us on other MMS Learn Online programs. Successful Strategies When Living with MS Rick Somers with Jock Murray.