

# ANNUAL REPORT

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This inaugural report spans 2023 and 2024, capturing the progress, impact, and milestones achieved since our establishment.

It gives an overview of our initiatives, partnerships, and plans, serving as both a reflection of our journey and a call to action for the road ahead. Together, we can build a future free from multiple sclerosis (MS).





The National Multiple Sclerosis Society was established on the principles of unity, determination, progress and community – values deeply rooted in the vision of the nation’s leadership.

**Her Highness Sheikha  
Hassa bint Mohamed bin  
Hamad Al Nahyan**

Chairperson of Board  
of Trustees, National Multiple  
Sclerosis Society

With a steadfast commitment to bettering the lives of people living with multiple sclerosis (MS), advancing research and increasing awareness, the Society stands as a pillar of support to our community.

Since its inception two years ago, the Society has launched impactful programs, and partnerships, all driven by a shared vision of collaboration and continuous progress. Central to our mission is the pursuit of fostering understanding, reducing stigma and championing awareness. Equally paramount, is advancing research and development. Through strategic collaboration with experts, esteemed institutions, and healthcare pioneers, the Society is accelerating progress in MS research, promoting best practices in treatment, and enhancing initiatives that elevate and improve the quality of life for those affected by MS.

The remarkable achievements made by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society are a reflection of the values instilled by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may his soul rest in peace, whose vision laid the foundation for a society where well-being and opportunity are within reach for all. Furthermore, it is a reflection of the wise leadership and unwavering support of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, whose commitment to creating meaningful impact on people's lives continues to drive this great nation towards greater prosperity and progress.

The Society remains dedicated to strengthening research, expanding support, and raising awareness. Through shared efforts and a commitment to innovation, we are shaping a future where MS no longer defines possibilities. Our efforts go beyond managing a condition; they focus on building a supportive ecosystem and creating opportunities for those living with MS to thrive.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the employees of the Society, its board members, and members of the medical advisory committee for their unwavering dedication. We also thank our partners, supporting Government organizations, private sector companies and medical institutions for their invaluable support, and commitment.

Moving forward we will continue to work towards a brighter future for all those in the UAE living with MS, shaping a future where every life is empowered, and every individual is supported in their journey.

We pray for guidance and prosperity for all who live on the land of Zayed, an enduring visionary and an icon of empathy, wisdom, and compassion.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) is driven by a clear and profound goal: To better the lives of people with MS.

## Her Excellency Dr. Fatima Al Kaabi

Vice Chair, National Multiple Sclerosis Society

This mission is rooted in the foundational values of the UAE, the directives of our leadership, and the legacy of our Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may his soul rest in peace).

His legacy emphasizes the importance of supporting all segments of society and facilitating a better quality of life for UAE citizens and residents.

NMSS operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Community Empowerment to address the challenges arising from MS diagnoses. Currently, the UAE reports an annual diagnosis rate of 19 cases per 100,000 individuals, the majority of whom are young men and women. In response, NMSS is committed to supporting those living with MS in accordance with the latest international standards and through mobilizing all available resources to find a cure for this condition.

Our approach is guided by five key principles: equity, inclusiveness, partnership, innovation, and long-term impact.

To achieve our ambitious goals and confront the challenges posed by MS, we have established three main pillars: the first of which is raising awareness, as we believe is essential for correcting misconceptions about MS.

Secondly, providing people living with MS with the required support and resources in collaboration with various stakeholders such as the Department of Health - Abu Dhabi. Finally, promoting research initiatives by supporting innovative scientific studies aimed at developing new treatments that may slow, stop, or even reverse the progression of MS.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all institutions, organizations, experts, volunteers, donors, and MS ambassadors for their collaboration and support of our initiatives.

Inspired by the vision of our leadership, we are committed to making happiness a way of life in the UAE. This vision is supported by a focus on sustainable wellness, an improved quality of life, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

We look forward to your continued cooperation and support in creating a better life for those living with MS.

# Medical Advisory Committee

The Medical Advisory Committee at NMSS brings together leading neurologists, nurses, and healthcare experts who are at the forefront of MS care in the UAE. Their role is critical: guiding our research, providing credible resources, and ensuring that every person living with MS has access to the best possible care.

From supporting groundbreaking research to developing evidence-based guidelines, their work helps us move closer to our goal: improving outcomes and quality of life for the MS community.



**Dr. Ahmed Shatila**  
Consultant Neurologist  
Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City (SSMC)



**Dr. Suzan Noori**  
Consultant Neurologist and MS  
Specialist  
University Hospital Sharjah



**Dr. Bassem Yamout**  
Director of Neurology  
Harley Street Clinic, Chair MENACTRIMS



**Dr. Jihad Inshasi**  
Consultant and Professor  
Rashid Hospital



**Dr. Ruqqia Mir**  
Consultant Neurologist  
Abu Dhabi Stem Cell Center (ADSCC)



**Dr. Anu Jacob**  
Consultant Neurologist  
Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi (CCAD)



**Joelle Massouh**  
Clinical Manager  
Harley Street Medical Centre

# 14 – 27

<sup>16</sup> The Fight Against MS  
in the UAE

<sup>22</sup> Our Mandate

<sup>24</sup> 2023: Our Achievements  
at a Glance

# ABOUT US

# The fight against MS in the UAE.



**2.9M**

MS prevalence has increased worldwide, with 2.9 million cases reported in 2023.

**x2**

Females are twice as likely to have MS. 67% of females vs 33% of males in the UAE.

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**MS poses unique challenges in the UAE and the Middle East.**

**Cultural nuances, environmental factors, and limited localized research contribute to gaps in awareness, diagnosis, and support to those affected by MS.**





Here are some of the factors affecting PwMS in the UAE:



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## Limited Awareness and Stigma

Many people in the UAE have limited knowledge about MS, leading to misconceptions and stigma.

This lack of awareness causes delays in diagnosis and treatment. Patients often feel isolated and misunderstood, which affects their mental health and willingness to seek help.

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## Insufficient Local Research

There is a shortage of MS research specific to the UAE and the MENA region. This gap hinders the development of treatments tailored to local needs.

Without region-specific data, healthcare providers rely on global studies that may not account for unique genetic or environmental factors affecting patients here.

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## Healthcare Accessibility Challenges

Access to specialized MS care can be difficult.

Patients face hurdles with insurance coverage and a limited number of healthcare professionals trained in MS treatment. These challenges prevent many from receiving timely and effective care, impacting their quality of life and disease progression.

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## Need for Community Support

Living with MS can be isolating without a supportive community. Many patients lack access to support groups or resources where they can connect with others facing similar challenges.

Building a strong community network is essential for emotional support and sharing coping strategies.

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*We Advance Research*

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*We Provide Support*

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*We Raise Awareness*

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Local research is crucial for developing treatments that are effective for our community. We fund and support studies that focus on the unique aspects of MS in the UAE. By collaborating with local and international researchers, we aim to contribute valuable insights to the global fight against MS.

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Living with MS can be isolating. We offer talks where PwMS, families and caregivers can connect, share experiences, and find encouragement. Our programs are designed to foster a sense of community, so no one has to face MS alone.

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Many people in the UAE are unaware of what MS is or how it affects those who live with it. We create culturally sensitive campaigns to educate the public, dispel myths, and reduce the stigma associated with MS. By increasing understanding, we hope to encourage early diagnosis and support for people living with MS.

## Our Achievements at a Glance

Since our inception in 2023, we've been dedicated to making a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by MS in the UAE. Over the past two years, we've launched impactful initiatives, forged meaningful partnerships, and engaged with our community.

Here's a look at some of our most significant achievements. These milestones reflect our unwavering commitment to raising awareness, advancing research, and providing support to the MS community in the UAE. We're proud of what we've accomplished together and look forward to building on this foundation in the years to come.





2023

## World MS Day: A Month of Awareness

## Established the MS Registry

## Participated as a Community Partner in Abu Dhabi Art 2023



- Launched our first awareness campaign featuring stories of PwMS by capturing their strength and resilience through 4 impactful videos.
- Organized the “Cube Roadshow”, a public art installation across the 7 Emirates representing the invisible symptoms of MS.
- Traveled across the UAE, engaging communities and sparking conversations.
- Set up awareness kiosks and activations in public spaces.
- Held the MS Walk to unite and support people living with MS.
- Conducted a knowledge seminar with ADNOC with over 70 participants.
- Partnered with local cafes and illuminated buildings to show solidarity.
- Introduced a Metaverse activation to reach a wider audience.



- Launched a national registry to improve data collection.
- Enhanced research capabilities to better support patients.



- Partnered with Dirwaza Curatorial Lab and founder Munira Al Sayegh to present the art piece “How is nature constant when the sun never rests” by Maitha Al Omaira.
- The commissioned artwork reflects the complexity of the human body, mirroring the nervous system and connecting themes of memory, renewal, and nature.
- The installation engaged 723 visitors, including notable leaders and cultural figures.

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## Launched our Research Grant Cycle



- Initiated funding opportunities for 5 MS research projects.
- Supported studies aimed at advancing understanding and treatment of MS.

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## Empowered the Community through Educational Talks



- Hosted 10 sessions.
- Engaged over 83 participants covering topics such as social stigma, connections, employment, and stress management.
- Provided expert insights and guidance to the MS community.

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## Forged Strategic Partnerships



- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the MS International Federation (MSIF) on May 30th – World MS Day, to collaborate on global advocacy priorities.

# 28 – 73

<sup>34</sup> Advancing Research and Advocacy

<sup>56</sup> Providing Support

<sup>64</sup> Raising Awareness



# PILLARS THAT DRIVE US

At the core of our mission are the pillars that guide every step we take: Advancing Research and Advocacy, Providing Support, and Raising Awareness.



AED **6M+**

Total amount awarded across 2023-2024, funding multiple studies over two grant cycles.

**10**

MS research projects funded over two grant cycles.

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These pillars are the foundation of our efforts to improve the lives of those affected by MS in the UAE.

Advocacy underpins all of our efforts, amplifying voices, driving change, and ensuring people with MS receive the care, resources, and understanding they deserve.



# 01

By **Advancing Research and Advocacy**, we aim to drive scientific discoveries and influence policies that lead to better treatments and care.

# 02

**Providing Support** means we're there for people living with MS every day, offering resources, programs, and an understanding community.

# 03

**Raising Awareness** involves educating the public, reducing stigma, and bringing MS into national conversations to foster understanding and support.





## Advancing Research and Advocacy

Over the past year, NMSS has reached significant milestones in our research and advocacy efforts, by partnering with key stakeholders, including the Department of Health – Abu Dhabi, to drive impactful and sustainable change for people living with MS.

Our commitment to improving the lives of PwMS is reflected in advancements achieved through promoting research aimed at improving MS care and ultimately finding a cure.

One of the standout achievements of this year is the publication of the MS Treatment Guidelines.

Published in a peer reviewed journal and effectively adopted by the Dubai Health Authority, these guidelines aim to standardize clinical decision-making and ensure comprehensive insurance coverage across the UAE. This milestone represents a significant step towards unified, high-quality care for all PwMS in the UAE.





## OUR PORTFOLIO

# MS Research

At the heart of our mission lies a commitment to advancing research that improves care, deepens understanding, and fosters innovation for people living with MS. Through targeted funding, international collaborations, and initiatives like research grants, registries, and fellowships, we're addressing immediate needs while building a foundation for long-term progress.

By supporting groundbreaking studies and nurturing a stronger research workforce, we're paving the way for better treatments, enhanced healthcare systems and lasting change.

Every step we take brings us closer to transforming lives and finding answers that will shape the future of MS care.

# 01



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

# Our Path Towards Leading MS-Related Research in the Region

### Research Grant Cycle:

Awarded over AED 2 million and funded 5 studies in 2023 grant cycle.

Launched a second grant cycle of AED 4 million in 2024 and committed to funding 5 new research projects.

### Research Outreach:

The 2024/25 research grant cycle yielded 46 accepted LOIs from Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, which included 15 international and regional collaborators.

In comparison to the previous year, a ~4-fold growth indicates that the prioritization of MS research has increased exponentially in the UAE.

### MS Treatment Guidelines:

Publication of national treatment guidelines in a peer-reviewed journal, will help ensure that clinical decision-making and insurance coverage is based on evidence-based data.

They have been adopted by Dubai Health Authority Ejadah program.

### MS Awareness Baseline Report:

Published a report on the baseline awareness of MS, its symptoms and manifestations within the general population across the UAE.

This highlighted that 70% of people had either limited or no knowledge of MS.

### International Research:

Committed to funding AED 1.5 million to international research by Stanford University that aims to study developing vaccines and therapeutic approaches targeting Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) entry glycoproteins.

This funding opportunity is a contribution to the US MS Society to end pathway of Pathways to Cure, a collaborative MS research effort of global MS organizations.

# Publication of MS Treatment Guidelines

NMSS has launched the first-ever national guidelines for the treatment of PwMS in the UAE.

Developed by a dedicated scientific task force comprising members of the Society's Medical Advisory Committee, these guidelines aim to provide the best medical support for people living with MS in the UAE.

The guidelines have been published in the Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders journal.

The treatment guidelines were formulated after an in-depth study of the best available global evidence, considering the unique characteristics of the MS community in the UAE, wide variations of health coverage and patient preferences.

The MS treatment guidelines have been presented to neurologists at the Brain Health Congress 2024 and at a MENACTRIMs 2024 pre-launch workshop.

## KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE TREATMENT GUIDELINES:

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### 01

Standardize the insurance coverage of disease modifying therapies (DMTs) and ensure that treatment sequences imposed by payers or insurance providers are driven by evidence-based data rather than DMT costs.

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### 02

Improve the access to therapies to ensure the facilitation of early treatment and optimization of personalized treatment with the most effective medication.

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### 03

Details guidance for treatment of pregnant and lactating populations, which have been otherwise undertreated.

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### 04

Encourage shared decision making in treatment plans between patients and clinicians.

**The MS treatment guidelines have been presented to neurologists at the Brain Health Congress 2024 and at a MENACTRIMs 2024 pre-launch workshop.**



## Research Grant Cycles

### **FIRST CYCLE (2023 / 2024)**

Awarded over **AED 2 million**, funding five groundbreaking studies.

### **SECOND CYCLE (2024 / 2025)**

Launched with **AED 4 million** in funding for 2024.

The response to our grant cycles has been remarkably strong, with accepted Letters of Intent increasing by over 300%, indicating a growing prioritization of MS research in the UAE.

**Research is the cornerstone of our mission at the NMSS.**

**Through rigorous research, we strive to uncover new treatments, improve patient care, and ultimately, find a cure for MS.**

## ONGOING STUDIES

# Advancing treatment: Abu Dhabi Stem Cells Center (ADSCC) trial

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### STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Study focus:

Evaluating ECP as a treatment for SPMS and RRMS.



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#### Study design:

Randomized, controlled, open-label trial

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#### Sample size:

45 Patients

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#### Estimated completion:

September 2025

ADSCC

مركز أبو ظبي للخلايا الجذعية  
ABU DHABI STEM CELLS CENTER

## Exploring innovative therapies to improve the lives of people with MS in the UAE.

ADSCC is conducting a groundbreaking clinical trial to evaluate the effectiveness of extracorporeal photopheresis (ECP) in the treatment of MS. Focusing on patients with Secondary Progressive MS (SPMS) and Relapsing-Remitting MS (RRMS), this study represents a significant stride toward enhancing symptom management and treatment possibilities for the MS community.



### A WORD FROM

Professor Yendry Ventura,  
CEO of ADSCC and Principal  
Investigator

**In alignment with UAE’s visionary leadership, we are deeply committed to advancing research that drives meaningful progress in healthcare, particularly for conditions like MS.**

**Our ongoing study on ECP as a treatment for MS underscores our pledge toward discovering new therapies for MS and improving patient outcomes. Our strategic partnerships within the sector and the scientific community like the NMSS enable us to continue driving innovation, ultimately working toward better treatments for those living with MS.**



## ONGOING STUDIES

# Advancing pediatric MS research: Harley Street Medical Center study (HSMC)

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### STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Study focus:



Compiling extensive data on paediatric MS patients to establish a comprehensive MENA-focused dataset.

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#### Study design:

Observational (registry-based), retrospective cohort study

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#### Sample size:

100 paediatric MS patients

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#### Estimated completion:

December 2024



**Building the largest cohort of paediatric MS patients in the MENA region to improve understanding and care.**

HSMC is spearheading a pivotal study titled “Multiple Sclerosis in Children: Epidemiology, Clinical Characteristics, and Treatment Patterns in the MENA Region.” This ambitious project aims to create the largest cohort of paediatric MS patients across 11 countries.

By examining the influence of age on treatment response, the study could provide invaluable insights, enhancing long-term outcomes among children affected by the disease in the MENA region.



#### **A WORD FROM**

Dr. Bassem Yamout, President,  
MENACTRIMS; Neurology Institute  
Director, Harley Street Medical  
Centre

**Our collaboration with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society has been instrumental in advancing our research on paediatric MS. We are deeply grateful for the grant provided by NMSS, which has been vital in supporting this critical research initiative.**

**Their commitment to elevating MS care in the UAE and the MENA region is helping us gather and analyse data that will shape the future of MS treatment, ultimately improving the lives of young patients across the region.**



# Enhancing MS diagnosis with AI: the LAMINATE project

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## STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

### Study focus:



Develop, optimize, and deploy LAMINATE as a fully functional automated lesion and atrophy segmentation tool.

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### Study design:

Retrospective study

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### Sample size:

150 MS patients

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### Estimated completion:

September 2026

**Developing cutting-edge AI tools to improve MRI analysis for better MS care in the UAE.**

Longitudinal AI-based MS Lesion and Atrophy Segmentation Tool (LAMINATE) project is an innovative initiative co-funded with DoH, led by NYU Abu Dhabi in collaboration with Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi and Yas Clinic. This project aims to develop an AI-driven tool for longitudinal MS lesion and atrophy segmentation using MRI data specifically curated from UAE patients.

By training advanced neural networks on local patient data, the goal is to create an accessible tool that supports the broader medical community by easing the process of a neuroradiologist in comparing lesions across different MRI scans particularly when dealing with numerous lesions.



**A WORD FROM**

The Principal Investigator,  
Osama Abdullah, Research  
Instrumentation Scientist II,  
NYU Abu Dhabi

**The development of this tool will dramatically ease the process by a neuroradiologist of comparing lesions across different MRI scans, particularly when dealing with numerous lesions.**



## ONGOING STUDIES

# Early prediction, timely diagnosis and accurate prognosis of multiple sclerosis from multi-modal data using artificial intelligence

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### STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Study focus:



Investigating and developing AI-driven algorithms to analyze multimodal data from patients diagnosed with MS.

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#### Study design:

Retrospective study

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#### Sample size:

A minimum of 1000 brain MRI scans plus hundreds of records for each patient

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#### Estimated completion:

End of 2024



## Utilizing machine learning for early diagnosis of MS.

This study aims to leverage advanced AI techniques to improve the detection, diagnosis, and prognosis of MS by analyzing patient data from 2019 to 2023. It will utilize machine learning algorithms, including Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Vision Transformers, to analyze brain MRI scans and patient clinical history. The study addresses significant gaps in current MS research, such as the limited use of longitudinal multi-modal data and the absence of clinically viable machine learning solutions for MS prognosis.

The project aims to study AI algorithms that can assist radiologists in early detection and objective assessment of MS progression and forecast clinical trajectories for people living with MS. This can potentially lead to commercial applications for improved patient outcomes.



### A WORD FROM

The Principal Investigator,  
Dr. Mohammed Yaqub, Associate  
Professor of Computer Vision,  
Mohammed Bin Zayed University  
for Artificial Intelligence.

**Through the generous funding from NMSS and the support from MBZUAI, the team is well equipped to tackle this problem and hopefully produce innovative solutions that could lead to transformative outcomes.**



## ONGOING STUDIES

# Addressing the eligibility of escalation versus early intensive approach in treatment-naïve relapsing MS patients using MRI and deep learning

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### STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Study focus:



Develop a new AI-based software able to predict the disability progression time in patients with relapsing MS treated with different disease modifying treatments (DMTs) using baseline point of care MRIs.

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#### Study design:

Retrospective observational study

## Utilizing machine learning for early intensive approaches.

The traditional treatment choices between low/moderate or high-efficacy of Disease Modifying Therapies (DMTs) remains a challenge for treating relapsing MS. Over the last years, neurologists have started following, in selected cases, an “early intensive approach”, instead of an “escalation strategy”, in which patients start with a safe, low or moderate-efficacy DMT and, in case of disease activity, switch to a high-efficacy DMT.

This study aims to improve treatment decisions for relapsing multiple sclerosis patients by developing an AI tool using patient data and MRI images to predict disease progression.



### A WORD FROM

Dr. Beatrice Bendetti,  
Neurologist, Neurological Institute,  
Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi

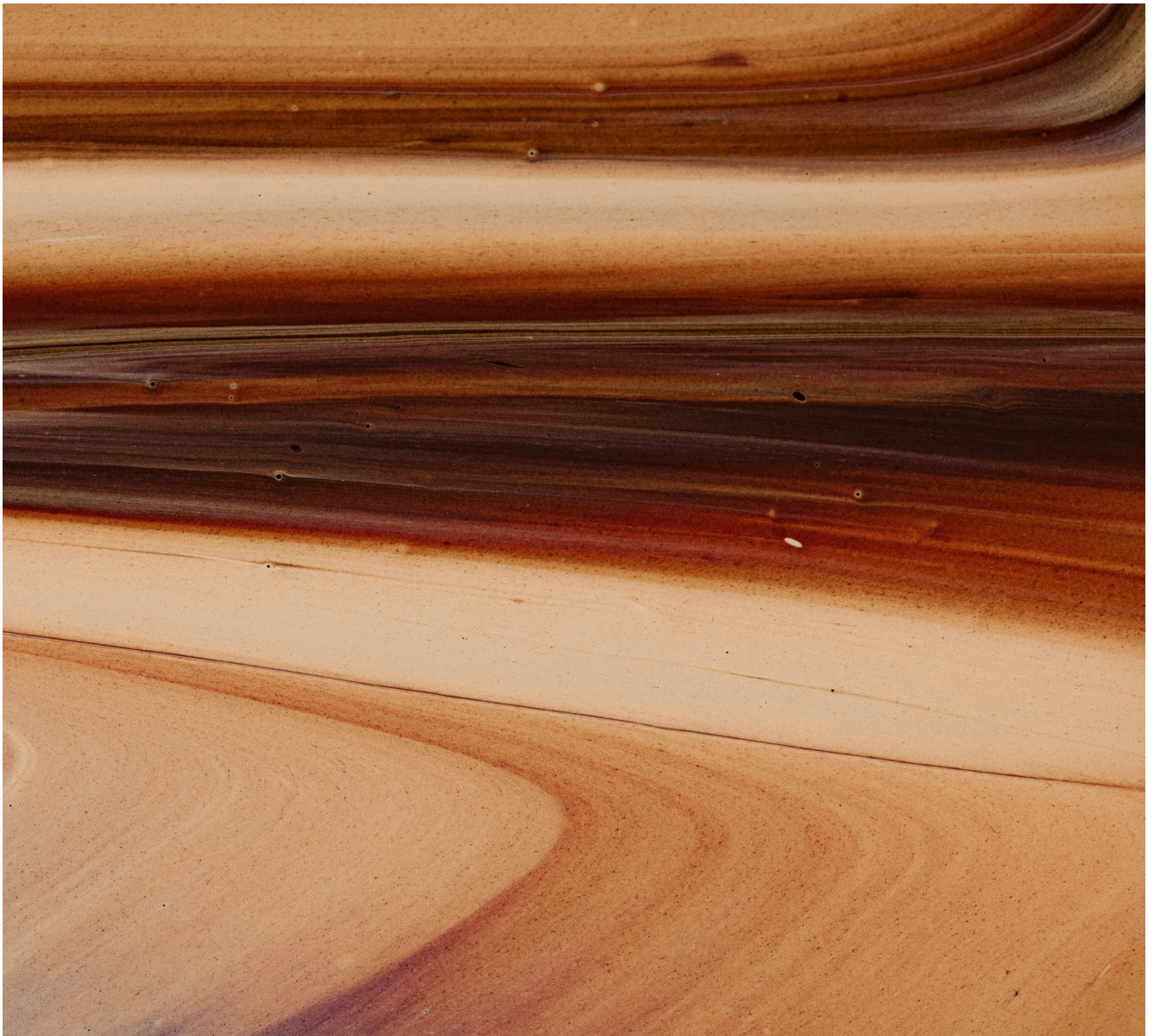
**The selection of disease modifying treatment in patients with MS has become increasingly complex due to the expanding therapeutic landscape. Our study aims to support this choice by developing an AI-based tool that predicts disease progression using MRI data.**

**By assisting neurologists in stratifying patients for treatment approaches, our tool has the potential to enhance personalized care and improve outcomes in MS management.**



## Fellowship and Training Programs

Building local capacity and fostering specialization in MS care and research are central to NMSS mission. This year, NMSS advanced opportunities for professionals to engage in specialized training and research, empowering them to enhance the lives of PwMS in the UAE.



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**Postdoctoral Research  
Fellowship:**

**01**

UAE National to be awarded  
during 2025.

NMSS funded a postdoctoral research fellowship for a UAE national through the MENACTRIMS Fellowship Program, supporting the development of MS-specific research expertise.

This initiative encourages greater engagement in innovative studies addressing regional and global MS challenges.

Through this program, NMSS is creating a pathway for healthcare professionals to specialize in MS research, treatment, and care, contributing to capacity building and fostering innovation in the UAE's MS ecosystem.

## Advocacy Efforts

We focused on advancing research and advocacy through education and awareness of MS among healthcare professionals, researchers and policy makers. Our key advocacy activities included speaker opportunities

at various conferences across the UAE, strengthening partnerships to drive MS as a priority in national programs, and releasing our whitepaper on employment and workplace inclusion.

**Placing PwMS  
at the heart of our  
efforts.**





## The Benefits and Impact of Advocacy:

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### Empowerment



Advocacy helps individuals feel more in control of their own lives, especially when managing a chronic condition like MS. Speaking up for their needs or rights builds confidence and self-efficacy.

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### Raising Awareness



Raising awareness among the public and healthcare professionals to improve understanding of MS and reduce the stigma, improving social and healthcare support.

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### Improving Quality of Life



Advocating for access to healthcare services, better insurance coverage, or workplace accommodations leads to tangible benefits for individuals living with MS.

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### Evidence Based Advocacy and Policy Change



Through evidence generation and collaborative advocacy, we work to prioritize MS in research, national programs, and policies that address healthcare delivery, employment, disability rights, and the overall well-being of PwMS.

## Key Advocacy Activities:

### **EMPLOYMENT AND MS WHITEPAPER**

We developed an employment and MS whitepaper titled “Re-thinking the Future of Workplace Inclusion for People with multiple sclerosis (PwMS)” to promote workplace inclusion for PwMS.

This document provides a roadmap with key recommendations for employers and policymakers.

We collaborated with stakeholders such as the Department of Government Enablement, Dubai Community Development Authority and Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (PoD) to ensure comprehensive and actionable insights.

### **CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION**

We raised awareness and advocated for MS as a national health priority through speaking engagements at major healthcare events:

- Abu Dhabi Global Healthcare Week
- Dubai International Patient Voices Summit
- World Rehabilitation Congress

### **EMPOWER MS**

We hosted Empower MS in 2023 and in 2024, to equip people with MS with tools for self-advocacy, workplace rights, and effective communication.

The program has strengthened patient advocacy by empowering participants to share their stories and advocate for better support and resources.

### **MS REGISTRY ADOPTION**

We successfully advocated for the inclusion of the MS Registry in the Department of Health - Abu Dhabi and Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre’s disease registry program.

This enhancement improves data collection and research capabilities, leading to better understanding of MS in the UAE and informing policies and treatment strategies.

### **AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF PwMS**

Including the voices of PwMS in all our programs by adding their perspectives in multi-stakeholder roundtables, focus groups and surveys to ensure they are represented in decisions that impact their health, well-being, and inclusion in society.



## Providing Support

Our commitment goes beyond research and advocacy — we're here to support PwMS in their daily lives. We focus on creating a safe and welcoming environment where individuals feel they belong.

Through our three portfolios — **MS Connections, MS Living, and MS Care** — we offer resources and programs that address mental, physical, and emotional well-being. In an effort to foster deeper connections within the MS community, we developed 6 new guides that provide practical and actionable support for PwMS, their families and caregivers.





## OUR PORTFOLIOS

# MS Connections, MS Living, MS Care

Living with MS can be overwhelming, but you don't have to navigate it alone. We've developed a comprehensive approach to support every facet of life with MS through three dedicated portfolios: MS Connections, MS Living, and MS Care.

Each one is designed to meet you where you are, offering resources, programs, and a community that understands your journey.

Our goal is simple — to make a positive difference in your daily life. Whether it's building meaningful connections, promoting wellness and healthy lifestyles, or providing personalized care and assistance, we're here to empower you.

Together, we're creating a supportive environment where everyone affected by MS can thrive.

# 02



## MS Connections

We recognize that community and connection are vital for those living with MS. **MS Connections** is our initiative dedicated to addressing the pressing issues faced by people living with MS and their caregivers.

Our goal is to become a trusted source of information and a supportive network that enhances the lives of those we serve.

Connecting PwMS through themed discussions and community programs across various platforms, ensuring accessibility for everyone wherever they are.

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Talks addressing  
key topics for the MS  
community

We're proud of the community we've built and remain committed to providing unwavering support to those who need it most.

18

Sessions addressed social stigma, connections, employment, stress management, family planning, caregiver support, mental health, advocacy, and self-empowerment.

140

Attendees reached, providing valuable insights and support.

12

MS Ambassadors and experts engaged, fostering a rich exchange of experiences and knowledge.

80%

Knowledge retention rate achieved among participants, demonstrating the effectiveness of the sessions.



## MS Living

Life with MS comes with unique challenges, and we're dedicated to making day-to-day living easier and more fulfilling.

**MS Living** addresses the physical, emotional, and mental aspects of life, encouraging healthy lifestyles and coping mechanisms.

Collaborating with trusted professionals in fitness, wellness, and mental health to provide accessible sessions tailored for the MS community.

## Art Therapy Workshops:

By focusing on wellness and healthy living, MS Living empowers individuals to take control of their health and find joy in everyday activities.

### 07

Sessions hosted across all Emirates.



Partnered with art studios, neurologist Dr Ahmed Shatila and MS Ambassador Muna Al Harbi to facilitate the sessions.

### 125

Participants welcomed at the sessions.

### 07

Volunteers supported at the sessions and connected with the MS community.



Helped participants manage stress through creative expression.



## MS Care

We understand that personalized support can make a significant difference. **MS Care** provides tailored services to address specific needs, from accessing reliable information to receiving specialized healthcare support.

Developing easy-to-access resources and facilitate funding to ensure people with MS receive the care they need.

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## Helpline:

# 800677

Dedicated support call center launched.

- Offers information, guidance, and emotional support to people living with MS.
- Provides assistance and mental health assessments.
- Accessible UAE-wide, with data helping us understand and respond to community needs.
- Utilizes an NMSS-led UAE wide directory of MS specializations, across healthcare and complementary care fields.

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## Training and Development:

### SPECIALIZED PHYSIOTHERAPY TRAINING:

# 04

UAE-based physiotherapists completed training.

In collaboration with the Italian MS Society, NMSS facilitated advanced training for UAE-based physiotherapists in Genoa, Italy.

These specialists are now equipped with the skills to deliver tailored care to people living with MS, elevating the quality of MS care available locally.



I learned about MS in detail which made me want to talk about it with the people I know and share the knowledge I gained with them.

Nursing Student, Fatima College of Health Sciences

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### NURSING STUDENTS PRECEPTORSHIP PROGRAM:

# 01

Nursing teaching faculty completed training.

MS Preceptorship Program is an initiative funded by NMSS, in collaboration with Harley Street Medical Center, to introduce final year nursing students at the Fatima College of Health Sciences to MS management.

# 08

Final year nursing students completed training.

# 75%

Of trainees reported it sparked further interest in learning more about MS, showing its impact in inspiring continued professional engagement with MS care.



## Raising Awareness

We are eliminating the stigmas associated with the condition and bringing MS into the national conversation.





## OUR PORTFOLIOS

# MS Engage & MS Educate

Raising awareness is about more than just sharing information — it's about starting conversations, reducing stigma, and making MS a topic people feel comfortable discussing.

By educating others about MS and what it means to live with it, we aim to foster understanding and support.

Awareness means bringing MS into everyday conversations — at home, at work, in healthcare settings — so those affected feel seen, heard, and supported.

In 2023 and 2024, we undertook several initiatives to raise awareness, especially around World MS Day.

Our efforts reached thousands of people and sparked important conversations throughout the UAE.

# 03



# MS Engage

**Building relationships and partnerships to expand our reach and advance our mission.**

**MS Engage** focuses on connecting with key stakeholders both locally and globally. We aim to broaden our impact by fostering collaborations, securing support, and engaging in meaningful dialogues that propel our initiatives forward.

## WHAT WE DO:

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### 01

Engage and cultivate partnerships to support relevant initiatives.

### 02

Develop innovative fundraising activities.

### 03

Maintain positive relationships with government entities and key stakeholders.



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## Move for MS:

An initiative dedicated to championing people living with MS through a diverse array of inclusive sports activities.

# 2,608

People joined the community step challenge.

Whether it's walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, hiking, or any other form of physical engagement, participants of all abilities are encouraged to join in.

- Promote physical activity & exercise.
- Increase awareness of MS across the community and foster a culture of giving.

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## National MS Coalition:

National coalition of key members across the MS landscape, including government entities, healthcare providers, insurance entities, pharma, access entities, and education entities that are coming together to support NMSS' priorities relevant to providing support and resources as well as driving research and development.



## MS Educate

Providing education on MS across various industries and advocating for improved quality of life and policies for PwMS.

**MS Educate** is dedicated to spreading knowledge about MS to different sectors, including workplaces and educational institutions.

By raising awareness and advocating for supportive policies, we aim to create environments where PwMS can thrive.



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## Workplace Awareness:

An educational program aimed at creating an inclusive and informed work environment by raising awareness about MS through knowledge seminars and information pieces.

- Joined the Inclusive Employment Ecosystem (IEE) membership, to facilitate jobs for PwMS and position NMSS as an inclusive employer.
- Published a PoD rights and benefits guide.
- Released a workplace whitepaper focusing on inclusive employment strategies.

## 03

Advocacy workshops held, in collaboration with The Butterfly.

---

## Youth Awareness:

An educational initiative to raise awareness about MS among university youth developing targeted educational courses.

## 300+

Students to enroll.

The 2024/25 Cohort for the course sees “Universal Design for Inclusion” as the umbrella theme and concept for this program to include 6 workshops embedded with University faculty-led courses to learn problem-solving strategies and tools for universal design for PwMS and other abilities and disabilities.

- 11 university campuses on board, across the UAE.
- 300+ students to enroll.
- 32 faculty members, 10 ambassadors, 20+ stakeholders engaged.

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## Art Apprenticeship:

“Curatorial Paths”, a curatorial apprenticeship, is a comprehensive 2-month program tailored for PwMS or similar chronic conditions.

It offers an in-depth exploration of curatorial practices, encouraging participants to develop their own ideas and proposals that reflect their unique perspectives and stories.

- 4 PwMS and chronic conditions trained.
- 4 exhibition plans created.
- 24 sessions and 3 exhibition/gallery across Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah conducted.
- 2-month internship with Dirwaza for apprentices planned.

## 04

PwMS and other chronic conditions trained.

## World MS Day 2023:



# 1.3M+

Views of the campaign videos.

# 23

Iconic buildings across the UAE lit up in orange.

# 390

Screenings of MS hero stories at Vox Cinemas.

In 2023, the UAE joined the global celebrations for World MS Day for the first time, marking a significant milestone in raising awareness and support for those affected by MS.

Spearheaded by NMSS, the event featured a series of impactful activities, including lighting up 23 iconic buildings in the signature MS color orange, a special video campaign with Etisalat and Vox Cinemas, and various community engagements such as mall pop-ups, art installations, and an MS Walk.

These initiatives aimed to empower PwMS, reduce stigma, and foster a supportive community.

**Our first participation in World MS Day saw activation and awareness across the UAE, igniting the conversation around MS.**



## World MS Day 2024:

The 2024 World MS Day in the UAE marked a significant milestone in the fight against MS, showcasing the power of collaboration and community engagement.

His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Development and Fallen Heroes' Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Erth Zayed Philanthropies, emphasized the UAE's commitment to supporting medical and care providers and advancing research to find a cure for MS.

The main event "MS Majlis" brought together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors to drive forward a national MS agenda, highlighting the transformative impact of joint efforts.



# Together, we ignited a movement across the nation, empowering people living with MS by showcasing their strength and resilience.

## 115

Stakeholders engaged at the MS Majlis.

## 423

Visitors engaged with NMSS awareness booths at major airports and malls.

## 227,362

Viewers reached through the MS Heroes video campaigns, countering misconceptions about MS.

## 13,046

Viewers reached through 700 cinema ads across the UAE, featuring stories of MS Heroes.

## 11

Buildings illuminated in the color of MS.



The formation of the National Coalition for MS with objectives to ensure an action-oriented approach, provide a forum for collaboration, and create a formalized mechanism to launch priorities.



Various awareness activities, including a virtual reality simulation at Galleria Mall and an MS Awareness Walk at Yas Mall, engaged hundreds of community members.









Stories That Inspire.

One example of progress in MS care is the establishment of autologous stem cell treatment in the UAE, which offers a promising option for eligible patients. Right now, PwMS and their caregivers need personalized care. Each PwMS has unique needs, whether it's managing the disease itself or addressing other socioeconomic factors, which calls for a holistic approach and comprehensive support.

Looking ahead, I hope to see equality in access to MS care for all people in the UAE. It's crucial to educate society on how to care for and support the MS community.

**DR. RUQQIA MIR**

Consultant Neurologist, Abu Dhabi  
Stem Cell Center (ADSCC)



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Personal stories inspire, educate, and connect us on a profound level. We highlighted a few experiences and insights from people living with MS, their caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

Their voices uncover the challenges they face and the strength they exhibit every day, reinforcing the importance of our mission.



**I no longer felt alone.  
There are people I can relate to and  
who truly understand me.**

Maryam Alqubaisi

I stumbled upon the NMSS website when I was looking for people who could relate to what I was going through.

Joining the first few MS Talks inspired me to become an MS Ambassador, share my story, and raise awareness about MS.

Rayan Daboul

Embarking on the MS journey can be overwhelming, but the community offers comfort and guidance.

Volunteering and engaging with NMSS has profoundly impacted my life.

As a social media influencer and public speaker, I've always been passionate about raising awareness and advocating for meaningful causes, but NMSS has elevated that passion to new heights.

Muna Al Harbi

Awareness plays a crucial role in the lives of those with MS.

Access to treatment  
and research remain vital  
concerns.

Managing MS is challenging without the added burden of expensive medications and complicated approval processes.

While the UAE excels in research, we're still yearning for a global breakthrough – a cure for MS.

MS Ambassador

## EXPERIENCES OF CAREGIVERS



My husband is an MS Ambassador. After being diagnosed with MS, he lost passion for almost everything.

The spark in his eyes when he started working with NMSS is something I will never forget. He's always volunteering and happy to support NMSS and the MS community in any way he can.

I'm happy when I see him excited and smiling while working on MS-related projects. This positivity has impacted our entire household – my kids are happy to learn and always want to hear their father's stories after each meeting he attends related to MS.

Shaima Alouchoch

Caregivers provide invaluable support, navigating their own challenges while ensuring the well-being of their loved ones.

Make MS a friend and a  
challenge that teaches patience  
and perseverance.

It's a reason to become stronger.

MS Caregiver

**DR. JIHAD INSHASI**

Consultant and Professor,  
Rashid Hospital

Many patients worry about the adverse effects of disease-modifying therapies (DMTs). To address this, we reassure them that we carefully balance safety and effectiveness through clinical assessments, radiological evaluations, and regular monitoring.

Looking ahead, many promising therapies are currently under research and will become available in the near future. However, ongoing education for both the medical community and society is essential to ensure better understanding, support, and outcomes for PwMS.





# 88 – 95

<sup>90</sup> With Gratitude and Thanks

<sup>94</sup> Honoring Our Donors



# OUR DONORS

# With gratitude and thanks.



**AED 2.2M**

Raised in-cash donations to fund MS research, care, and awareness initiatives.

**AED 1.1M**

Secured in in-kind donations to support programs and resources for the MS community.

---

**Our achievements would not  
be possible without the invaluable  
support of our partners.**



We deeply value our collaborations with government entities, medical institutions, international MS societies, and industry leaders.

These partnerships are crucial to our success in advancing research, providing support, and raising awareness.



By working together, we combine resources, expertise, and passion to make a greater impact.

Our partners share our commitment to improving the lives of PwMS, and their support amplifies our efforts.

We look forward to continuing these collaborations and building new ones as we strive toward our shared goals.

Our partners and fundraising efforts have allowed the notable contributions of AED 1 million for MS Research, AED 567 thousand for the MS Helpline and AED 650 thousand to fund programs.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR MAJOR DONORS

Major donors are individuals or organizations that have contributed AED 100,000 or more in cash or in-kind value.

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Shurooq

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STEPPI

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The Bridge

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The Butterfly

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US MS Society

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Vox Cinema

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Yas Mall

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Yoga One

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Zayed Charity Run

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Zayed Higher Organization (ZHO)

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# 96 – 107

<sup>100</sup> A Message from NMSS

<sup>102</sup> Support Us



**CONTRIBUTE TO OUR FUNDRAISING  
CAMPAIGN**





GET INVOLVED

A MESSAGE FROM THE NMSS TEAM:  
ON THE YEARS AHEAD

Looking ahead at 2025, we stand on the brink of a new era in MS care and empowerment—one defined by global collaboration, deeper community engagement, and a steadfast commitment to achieving real progress for people living with MS.



The National Multiple Sclerosis  
Society Team

The coming year and the years that follow hold immense promise. We will expand our reach during World MS Day, ensuring that MS is no longer a quiet struggle but a recognized and understood condition across the UAE and the region. By partnering with a broader network of international experts, researchers, we continue to grow a collective movement dedicated to improving lives and nurturing hope.

The MS Coalition we helped initiate will now come to life, connecting specialists, policymakers, caregivers, and people living with MS to turn promising ideas into tangible action. Through its meetings, research exchanges, and advocacy efforts, this coalition will champion stronger policies, greater access to treatments, and more effective support structures that transcend borders.

Community efforts will continue to anchor our work. Our Talks and education initiatives will evolve, reaching more voices and perspectives—especially those of young people whose awareness and empathy today will shape more inclusive societies tomorrow.

But our ambitions will not thrive in isolation. The support of individuals, communities, and partners is what will transform these plans into realities. To everyone reading this — to every volunteer, supporter, donor, and healthcare professional — we invite you to be part of this next chapter. Get involved in our initiatives, share our message or lend your expertise. Your participation can help spark a chain reaction of positive change.

As we look ahead, we see a future where MS care is more advanced, where stigma gives way to understanding, and where every PwMS can access the resources and respect they deserve.

We are confident that with our collective efforts — spanning continents, communities, and generations — we will forge a path toward a brighter future for all those impacted by MS. Let's move forward, side by side, determined to bring this vision to life.

**We look forward to your continued cooperation and support in creating a better life for those living with MS.**

GET INVOLVED

# Support the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's fight against MS.



With over 2.9 million people worldwide living with MS, many still face barriers to proper treatment, community support, and the understanding they deserve.



Your help can empower those most affected – ensuring they receive the resources, care, and opportunities needed to live fulfilling lives.

[NationalMSSociety.ae/donate](https://NationalMSSociety.ae/donate)

# Your support is crucial in driving our mission forward.

---

## Support Our Research Efforts



Invest in the future of MS care by contributing to our research initiatives. Your financial support helps fund groundbreaking studies and advancements in treatment, bringing hope to those affected by MS.

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## Volunteer Your Time and Skills



Offer your expertise or time to support our programs and events. Whether you're a healthcare professional, educator, artist, or simply passionate about making a difference, your contribution can have a significant impact.

---

## Become an Advocate



Stand with us in raising awareness about MS. Share information within your networks, challenge misconceptions, and encourage open conversations. Your voice can help reduce stigma and promote understanding in your community.

---

## Join Our Community



If you're living with MS or caring for someone who is, connect with us. Participate in our workshops, and wellness programs to access resources, build relationships and find encouragement.

Whether you're an individual, a professional, or part of an organization, there are many ways you can make a meaningful impact on the lives of those affected by MS.

Every action, big or small, brings us closer to our goal of improving the lives of those affected by MS.

Reach out to us to learn more about how you can get involved and make a difference.

---

## Collaborate with Us



Organizations and professionals can partner with us to expand our reach and impact. Together, we can develop programs, advocate for policy changes, and create a more inclusive society for PwMS.

## WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

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### Living with MS or a Caregiver

Share experiences, find support, and inspire others by connecting with our community.

---

### Researchers

Partner with us to advance treatment and deepen understanding of MS.

---

### Government Officials or Policymakers

Collaborate to shape policies that improve access and support for PwMS.

---

### Healthcare Professionals

Join our network to provide quality care and treatment for those affected.

---

### Donors and Volunteers

Support our mission by donating, participating in events, or raising awareness.



Contribute to our fundraising campaign.





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First Edition

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