



Overcoming MS

Our 2024-26 plans to help
more people live well
with MS

Our vision, purpose and values

Our 2024-26 strategy was created after research and a series of discussions with our community members, colleagues and Board to maximise our impact.

Our vision – the world we seek:

A world in which living a full and healthy life with MS is possible for all.

Our purpose – the impact we will make

To enable everyone with MS to achieve optimal health and wellbeing through making informed lifestyle choices.

Our values – the principles behind our work

- **Knowledgeable** – We share evidence-based information about the Overcoming MS Program.
- **Empowering** – We show that living well with MS is possible by making informed lifestyle choices to take control of your physical and mental health.
- **Inclusive** – We make everyone feel welcome, whatever their background, status, and symptoms.
- **Community-focused** – We test ideas with our community and connect with them, providing reassurance, compassion and a safe community where they can connect with others.
- **Collaborative** – We work with others to increase our impact.
- **Welcoming** – We are warm, approachable and down to earth.



“Without your generosity, we would not be able to deliver our essential services, and we are truly grateful.”

We are building on our history of delivering life-transforming support to the MS community. Now, we aim to reach a greater number of people, understand and deliver to their needs more effectively, and work with partners to achieve greater impact.

Of course, this takes resources. We rely on individuals, Trusts, Foundations, corporates and all who donate, fundraise, leave legacies or support us in other ways.”

– **Alex Holden**
Chief Executive



About MS



What is MS?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a neurological condition that affects the central nervous system. The coating that protects some nerves; myelin, is damaged in people with MS. The immune system, which fights off infection, mistakes myelin for a foreign body and attacks it.

This causes a range of life-altering symptoms, which can include problems with balance, vision, extreme fatigue, pain, muscle spasms, problems with thinking and memory, as well as bowel and bladder issues and many more.

Many of these symptoms will be common to other conditions, which can make MS difficult to diagnose early on. It's also why MS is different for everyone, making it difficult to manage.

Having MS is life-altering, but a full and healthy life with MS is possible.

The impact of an MS diagnosis

Every five minutes, someone, somewhere in the world is told that they have multiple sclerosis. There are currently 2.9 million people in the world living with MS.

When you're diagnosed with MS, it can feel like 'a punch in the guts'; in just seconds, the future that you saw for yourself and your loved ones has been shattered. Knowing you have MS can feel incredibly isolating and lonely. Fear of the unknown can descend as hope ebbs away.

A diagnosis often comes at a time when you're in the prime of your life, when you should be planning your future, not facing a lifetime of uncertainty. Currently, there is no cure for MS.

But Overcoming MS is here to provide hope: through lifestyle changes, backed by scientific research, that a healthy and fulfilling life with MS is possible.

Community story: the impact we make

Geoff's story

What Overcoming MS means to me is that I know that I'm doing whatever I can to improve my condition, and I've got a great community for advice and support. As a result, I feel much more in control of my treatment, I'm much more supported by my peers and I can have an optimistic outlook on my future.

Despite the fact that I struggle with walking and use a stick most of the time, I'm confident that the Overcoming MS Program lets me be the best possible version of myself.

Supporting the charity

I support the work of Overcoming MS by volunteering my time to be the host of the *Living Well with MS* podcast, interviewing our guests. We have now created over 150 episodes with experts and members of the community achieving over 100,000 downloads around the globe.

“
I'm confident that the Overcoming MS Program lets me be the best possible version of myself.”

– **Geoff Allix**
Volunteer





Why we exist

- **Our difference** – We give hope to people impacted by MS by raising awareness globally of the evidence-based impact of lifestyle on MS.
- **What we do** – We act as a catalyst for change – we inform, support, empower and collaborate to provide the best ways to enable as many people as possible globally to follow the Overcoming MS Program and live well with MS.
- **Our impact** – To deliver positive results in people’s physical and mental wellbeing and an understanding of the impact of lifestyle on MS.

Bringing hope and wellbeing to the MS community

Overcoming MS – bringing hope

For people at the point of a diagnosis with MS, hope is often stolen away. **Overcoming MS is here to restore that hope.** We help people and healthcare professionals understand how evidence-based lifestyle changes can give people with MS a future. **We want everyone to know that living well with MS is possible.**

There is substantial scientific evidence that lifestyle choices, alongside medication, benefit physical and mental health.

The Overcoming MS Program

The Overcoming MS Program is based on comprehensive research by Professor George Jelinek. The Program is based on scientific evidence on the impact of lifestyle changes in managing the short-term impact of symptoms as well as the long-term progression of the disease.

The Program's seven lifestyle pillars include:

- Diet
- Sunlight & vitamin D
- Physical activity
- Stress management
- Medication
- Family health (risk reduction for family members)
- Changing your life, for life (ensuring long term change)

A high quality diet, such as that recommended as part of the Overcoming MS Program, has been shown to reduce disability progression in people with MS by as much as 50% over 7 ½ years.¹

What we do

Our work can be divided into four main areas:

- **Inform** – We ensure people are aware and fully informed about the Overcoming MS Program as an evidence-based way to help self-manage MS through lifestyle choices.
- **Support** – We facilitate peer to peer support through our accessible and responsive community and support people with MS through our range of events, webinars and content.
- **Empower** – We help people with MS feel more hopeful, optimistic, and empowered, knowing they can take control of their MS and lead a more full and healthy life.
- **Collaborate** – We Influence and collaborate with the broader MS community, healthcare professionals and experts to increase our reach and our impact.

¹ Longitudinal associations between quality of diet and disability over 7.5 years in an international sample of people with multiple sclerosis, *European Journal of Neurology*, July 2023

Our future plans 2024-26



Reach more people

We will raise awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyle and the Overcoming MS Program so that as many people as possible understand that there is hope after an MS diagnosis.

- By engaging healthcare professionals to advocate healthy lifestyle to their patients
- By investing in our digital functionality and content so we can reach people across the globe



Deliver quality support

We will deliver world class information, tools and support to empower the community with confidence and knowledge so people can follow, understand and share the Program, wherever they start.

- By enhancing our existing products and services and expanding access to all
- By working closely with our community and our experts to deliver the support people need



Build our authority

We will build the authority of Overcoming MS – both the charity and the Program – so that we can increase our reach and impact.

- By clearly communicating the existing evidence base and researching new developments
- And by influencing and working in partnerships to share our expertise and learn from others



Build our capability

We will grow a collaborative, knowledgeable, passionate and sustainable team so that we can increase our responsiveness to the needs of our community.

- By developing our staff and volunteers
- By building our team of facilitators to increase our capacity and impact



Grow our income

We will develop our financial growth so that we can increase our independence.

- By increasing fundraising via diversified activity
- By generating income through other sources while reducing our cost base



We need your support to continue helping people with MS



I extend my deepest appreciation to all our supporters. We are helping to restore hope that living well with MS is possible.”

Dowshan Humzah, Chair of Board

Give money

All of our services that support people with MS are paid for by money raised from trusts, individuals donating or fundraising. If you are able to, please consider taking part in a fundraising activity, setting up a regular donation or even leaving a gift in your will. We are truly grateful for the support we receive.

People in our community raise money in a range of ways, from community art events to fundraising such as sponsored marathons, to simple donations of money. Any financial gifts, however small, add together to make a difference.

Please donate at overcomingms.org/donate to enable more people to live well with MS

Give time

Our volunteers are essential to our success, as they enable us to have direct connections with people with MS around the world.

As well as Ambassadors leading our Circle groups, who provide support to others in their local areas, we have a range of roles including giving advice on our communications or providing healthcare professional advice. Without our team of volunteers we would not be able to make our impact.

**Please consider donating your time to help us support people around the world with MS.
Email volunteer@overcomingms.org**

Collaborate

Collaborating with other organisations is critical for us and we already work with MS charities in the UK and other healthcare organisations.

We are keen to grow our network by identifying organisations supporting people with MS who might be interested in working with us.

**If you would like to collaborate with us, please get in touch.
Email contact@overcomingms.org**

Community story: the impact we make



Yasmin's story

MS diagnosis

I was diagnosed at the age of 29. It was completely life-changing. I had my first symptom a couple years before that. I woke up one day and the vision in my left eye was a little bit off, a little bit blurred. Over a period of about five days, my vision completely deteriorated.

It took me a while to get medical help because I was so stuck in the rat race. My manager at the time encouraged me to go to hospital. Then, lots of symptoms came out of the blue over a couple of years until I eventually got my diagnosis.

When I was diagnosed, my medical professionals left me feeling terrified and dread with their comments like: *'Go live your life now.'* I left my diagnosis appointment feeling completely lost and hopeless.

Finding Overcoming MS

When I found Overcoming MS, it was a little light in a very dark place and there was a little bit of hope that maybe there is a different path here. Maybe there's another option. I still remember that feeling to this day. What Overcoming MS means to me is this lightness, this feeling. It's hope. There are things that you can do to help.

“

Overcoming MS needs to reach more people.”

– **Yasmin Neves**
Facilitator

I know that I've got so much more control over my future. All these years in, I feel so much better, healthier, happier, more content. But Overcoming MS hasn't just helped me improve my health. It's had a knock on impact on lots of areas of my life. And I know I wouldn't be who I am today without the charity.

The charity and the need to reach more people

The charity is filled with so many great things. The podcast, the books, the recipes, and for me, the biggest thing is my local Circle. I still remember the day we met for the first time. Just being in that safe space where we just got each other. That's healing in itself.

Overcoming MS needs to reach more people. More people need to know that they can live a healthier life with this condition. It is not well known at the moment. It's about making sure that people have the choice.



With your support, we can enable more people to live well with MS

Overcoming MS

Connect with us

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Registered charity in England and Wales (1157579), Scotland (SC050752) and operate in Northern Ireland.

Registered company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (9044459).

Related charities: Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis Ltd (ABN 50 603 488 508) in Australia and Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis USA Inc. incorporated in Delaware, USA.