

# Lifestyle education and community support improves quality of life and self-efficacy in people with MS

Overcoming  
MS

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## Background

Evidence shows the importance of positive lifestyle behaviours as part of holistic management of multiple sclerosis (MS) (Giovannoni 2024) yet awareness and application of lifestyle choices is not widespread (Wills 2024); education is essential (Bassetti 2022). The Overcoming MS charity developed supportive, community-centred education to inform and support people living with MS to make sustainable lifestyle choices to improve their quality of life.

## Method

Our objective: was to empower people living with MS to make sustainable healthy lifestyle changes and support their quality of life and sense of wellbeing.

Co-designed with people with MS, online education 'Pathway to Overcoming MS' informs and supports an approach to positive living with MS encompassing nutrition, medication, physical activity, stress management and behaviour change. The education, spanning 8 weeks, includes group consultation and discussion, expert teaching from people with lived experience of MS and peer support through a closed online community. Surveys before and after education capture data on wellbeing and self-efficacy.

"So lovely to talk to people who 'get it' and have good advice so that you can move forward and start to try and manage this condition yourself."

"This course has given me so much information; it's given me hope.

It's given me confidence that I can do things myself as well to help manage some of the symptoms."

## Results

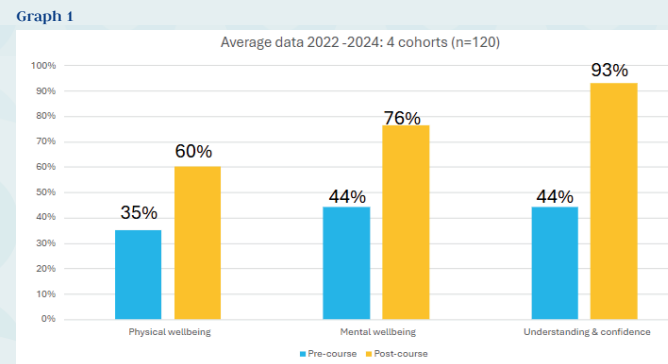
4 courses ran from 2022-2024, attended by 120 people living with MS. Reviewing mean data across all 4 cohorts, there were marked improvements in perceived physical and mental wellbeing; in comparing pre and post-course subjective self-reported scores, we see an average rise of **25%** and **32%** respectively.

Confidence in understanding of, and adherence to, the lifestyle medicine Program rose by an average of 49% and confidence in talking to friends and family about lifestyle choices by **26%**.

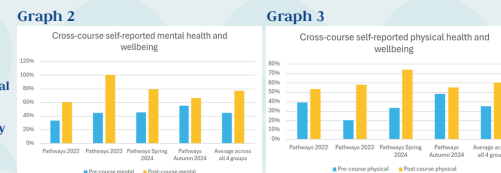
"Recently diagnosed, I was fearful and overwhelmed. The facilitators and participants have given me hope, enabled me to focus on the positives and how I can best help myself. I'm now talking more openly about my own situation and am feeling more confident."

"This course has changed my life!"

Graph 1: Mean pre and post-course self-reported scores across: satisfaction with physical and mental wellbeing, and confidence in understanding and feeling able to implement lifestyle changes



Graph 2 & 3: Mean pre and post-course self-reported scores across: satisfaction with physical and mental wellbeing shown for each cohort, highlighting consistency of findings group by group



## Conclusion

Attending 'Pathways' demonstrates a consistent positive impact on quality of life with significant positive impact on individuals' perceived physical and mental wellbeing. Increased confidence in understanding and implementing healthy lifestyle choices and sharing this with loved ones suggests increased self-efficacy.