National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a nervous system disease that affects the brain and spinal cord. It damages the myelin sheath, the material that surrounds and protects nerve cells. When damage occurs, nerve "communication" is disrupted. This damage slows down or blocks messages between the brain and body. Some symptoms that might occur include:

- Vision problems
- Muscle weakness
- Trouble with balance
- Feelings of numbness or "pins and needles"
- Thinking and memory problems

Multiple Sclerosis is an illness diagnosed in over 350,000 persons in the United States today. In addition to a complete medical history, physical examination and blood tests, your doctor may refer you to a neurologist, a doctor with special training in diseases of the nervous system, before a diagnosis of MS is made.

MS is an "autoimmune" disease in which, for unknown reasons, the body's immune system begins to attack normal myelin tissue. There is a theory that viruses may play a role in the development of this disease. Ninety percent of MS patients are diagnosed between the ages of 16 and 60, but it can make its first appearance in early childhood or after age 60.

There is, as yet, no cure but there are many promising medicines which might slow the disease down and help control symptoms. Research on MS continues, and there are a number of treatments currently under investigation.

For more information contact:

Multiple Sclerosis Foundation
National toll-free Helpline
1-888-MSFOCUS
(673-6287)

or the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
www.nihs.nih.gov