

Prioritize \$20 million for the MS Research Program in FY25 (level funding)

House: Sign on to Dear Colleague Letter (Cárdenas, Trahan, Fitzpatrick)

House and Senate: Prioritize and Submit \$20M MSRP Request to Congressional Appropriators

MSRP

- Congress established the MS Research Program (MSRP) in FY09 to support innovative and impactful research and it remains the **only federal research funding stream specifically for MS**.
- The MSRP was funded at **\$20 million in FY23** and marked at level funding in the House FY24 Defense Appropriations bill.
- Our **request for FY25 is for level funding at \$20 million**, given the current appropriations environment and constraints.
- MSRP gives researchers the funding and flexibility they need to address urgent gaps and/or novel discoveries that could make an immediate impact for people affected by MS.
 - Neuroprotection, repair and restoration of function is a documented unmet need in solutions for people with MS and is an MSRP strategic priority.
- Funding at \$20 million allows the MSRP to fund clinical trials and attract and retain early investigator talent in MS and neurology.
- People with MS provide direct input into how grant proposals would impact people with MS.
- The Society is a strategic partner with federal research agencies by providing thought leadership, global convening activities and also directly funding research.
 - To date, the Society has funded \$1.2 billion in MS research.

MSRP Progress Towards Ending MS

- MSRP received a total appropriation of \$133.3 million during FY09-FY23, funding 208 research awards.
- To date, **MSRP funds have resulted in:**
 - An FDA breakthrough device designation for an MS blood biomarker test
 - 11 clinical trials
 - 253 peer-reviewed journal publications with a total citation of 11,794
 - \$45.6 million in follow-up funding for 63 new grants
 - 4 issued patents and 3 patent applications
- A blood biomarker test to predict or assess risk of disability can be done in an office setting, does not require the use of an MRI and is less expensive than an MRI.

MS and military service-related relevance and impact:

- MS has a higher incidence in military service members than in the general population.¹
- The Society estimates that nearly 70,000 American veterans live with MS.
- Between 2013-2022, within the Military Health System:²
 - 5,362 active duty and reserve members received a new diagnosis of MS.
 - They had 39,841 total medical encounters (including outpatient and inpatient encounters).
 - 155,814 other DOD beneficiaries (military retirees, former service members and family members) received an MS diagnosis.
 - These beneficiaries had 1,245,093 total medical encounters.

What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?

- MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information between the brain and body. Early treatment minimizes disease progression.
- Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis.
- The progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted.
- Nearly 1 million people in the United States live with MS.

Tammy's Story – New Jersey

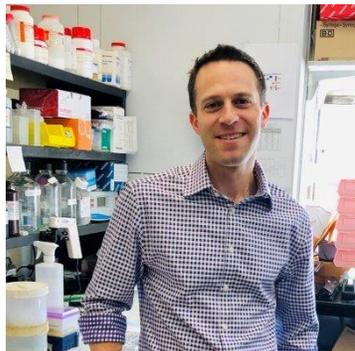


It can be intimidating to be on a panel with brilliant scientific minds, but you are there as a respected expert on that team. As a consumer reviewer, I am there to evaluate the impact of the proposals on the MS community and people living with MS. While the scientific reviewers focus on assessing the scientific merit and feasibility of each proposal, I provide insight into its significance, relevance, and practicality for all individuals living with MS. Throughout the process I learned so much about exciting new avenues of research, with novel and promising ideas presented by brilliant scientists dedicated to MS research. It's cause for much optimism. But the scientists learn a lot from the consumer reviewers as well, such as the challenges, priorities and hopes of those living with MS, which I hope will inform their future proposals.

For years, I grappled with symptoms like unexplained fatigue cycles, numbness and tingling, and cognitive issues, which led me to suspect MS. Doctors dismissed my concerns, attributing my symptoms to being 'a tired mother of young children with carpal tunnel syndrome.' In March 2003, sudden numbness in both legs prompted an MRI, revealing a spinal cord lesion, though an "official" medical diagnosis was still 3 years away. I was the busy mother of a 2-year-old potty training toddler, and a 6-year-old baseball loving 1st grader...and I was sick. I had worries and questions, but my concern for my children was always at the forefront. How could I manage my disease and still care for my kids? And were my children at risk for getting MS themselves? Because research had been so vital in shaping my journey with MS, from my diagnosis to guiding treatment decisions, I realized the importance of this opportunity. I'm proud to have served as a consumer reviewer for the past three years, and a mentor to novice reviewers the last two.

By combining the brightest science minds with the real experiences of people with MS, the MSRP is a crucial research program that is well positioned to find solutions for all people with MS, including our military service members and veterans.

Michael's Story - Maryland



In 2020, Dr. Michael Kornberg received a research award from MSRP to explore the potential of a compound to promote remyelination and repair in MS. For people with MS, the success of his research could open doors to a therapy to promote myelin repair, which could restore neurologic function.

In addition to being a researcher, Dr. Kornberg is also a clinician who treats people with MS. His daily interactions with patients reaffirms his commitment to repairing lost function. The MSRP strategic plan focuses on this critical unmet need of repair and restoration of function, calling for research in this area. Current MS treatments prevent relapses, but no treatments yet restore function.

Dr. Kornberg's research is focused on a compound that already has a well-established safety profile in human trials in cancer and Alzheimer's disease. This means positive outcomes from his research could then quickly be advanced into clinical trials in people with MS.

In fact, Dr. Kornberg finds MSRP to be unique because "MSRP has funding mechanisms for the full spectrum of research from basic science to translational research, which focuses on how research can get directly to patients. We've identified a very promising drug candidate in our current study, and we plan on applying back to MSRP to advance into clinical trials."

1. Eussing EC, et al. Estimated incidence of multiple sclerosis among United States Armed Forces personnel using the Defense Medical Surveillance System. *Mil Med.* 2012 May;177(5):594-600.
2. Data is from the Military Health System (2013-2022) from the Armed Forces Surveillance Division.