

Psychological problems

People with MS may experience a variety of psychological and emotional problems. Some people with MS suffer from depression or may alternate between depression and elation. The problems may show up as (just for example):

- Changeable emotions
- Crying
- Uncontrolled laughter
- Euphoria
- Anxiety
- Sexual difficulties
- Irritability
- Difficulties with relationships
- Social isolation

Treatment

A full assessment of a person's social and emotional needs should be undertaken by a team that includes the general practitioner, and support measures introduced as necessary.

Depression is sometimes unrecognised by the sufferer and medical staff may wish to test for depression and cognitive difficulties to see if treatment is appropriate. Depression can be treated with antidepressant medication and/or psychotherapy.

Other psychological problems can be helped by psychotherapy either individually or in group sessions. This can be particularly helpful during the early stages of the disease, soon after diagnosis. It is also possible to combine psychotherapy with relaxation therapies . Self-help groups serve as a rich sources of useful information.

Reference texts

Gibson J, Frank A. Supporting individuals with disabling multiple sclerosis. J Roy Soc Med 2002; 95: 580-586.

Kraft GH, Catanzaro M. Living with Multiple Sclerosis – A Wellness Approach. Demos Medical Publishing, New York 2000:p125.