



# Interdisciplinary Clinics Within A MS Program : A Novel Approach To Comprehensive Care



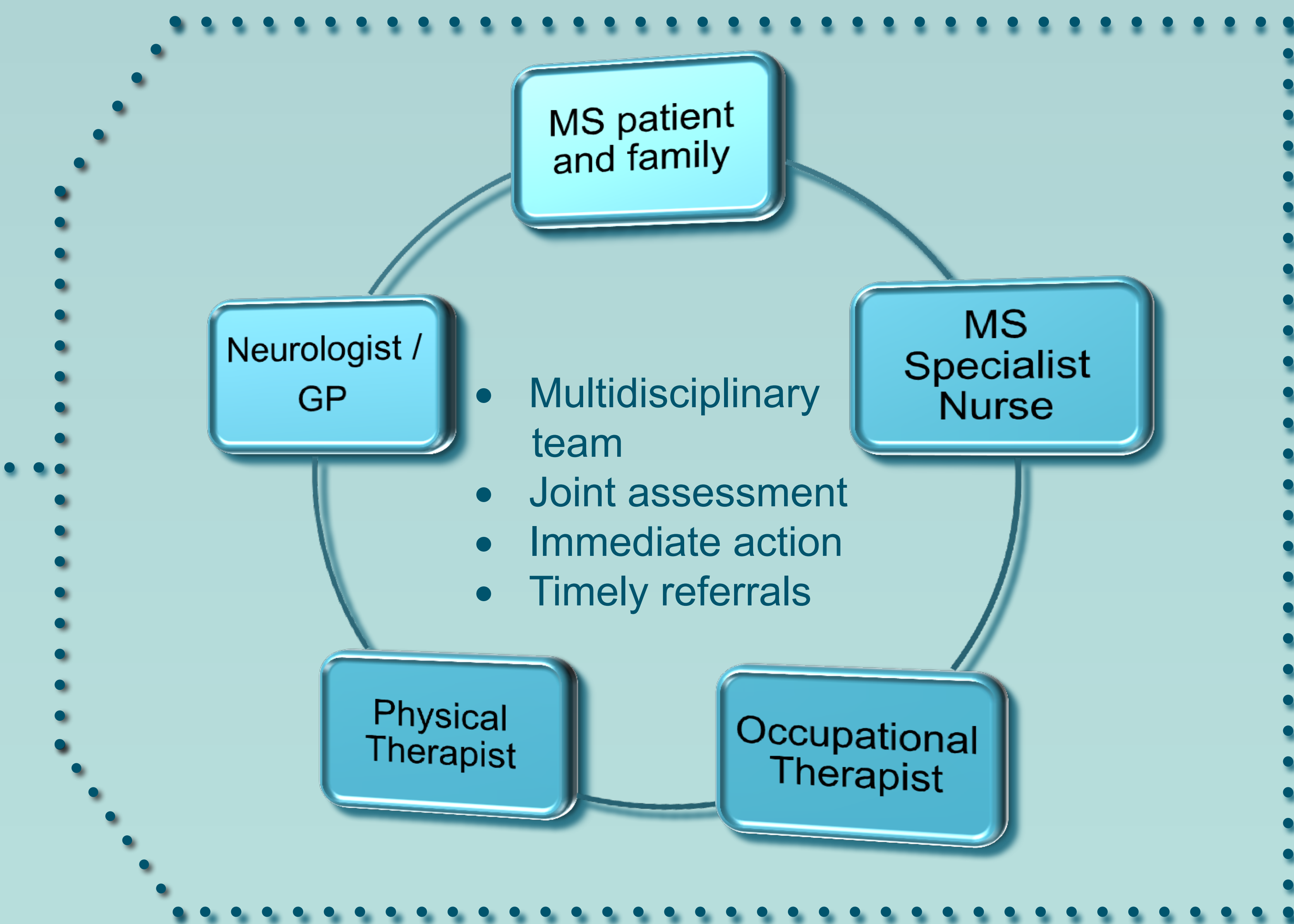
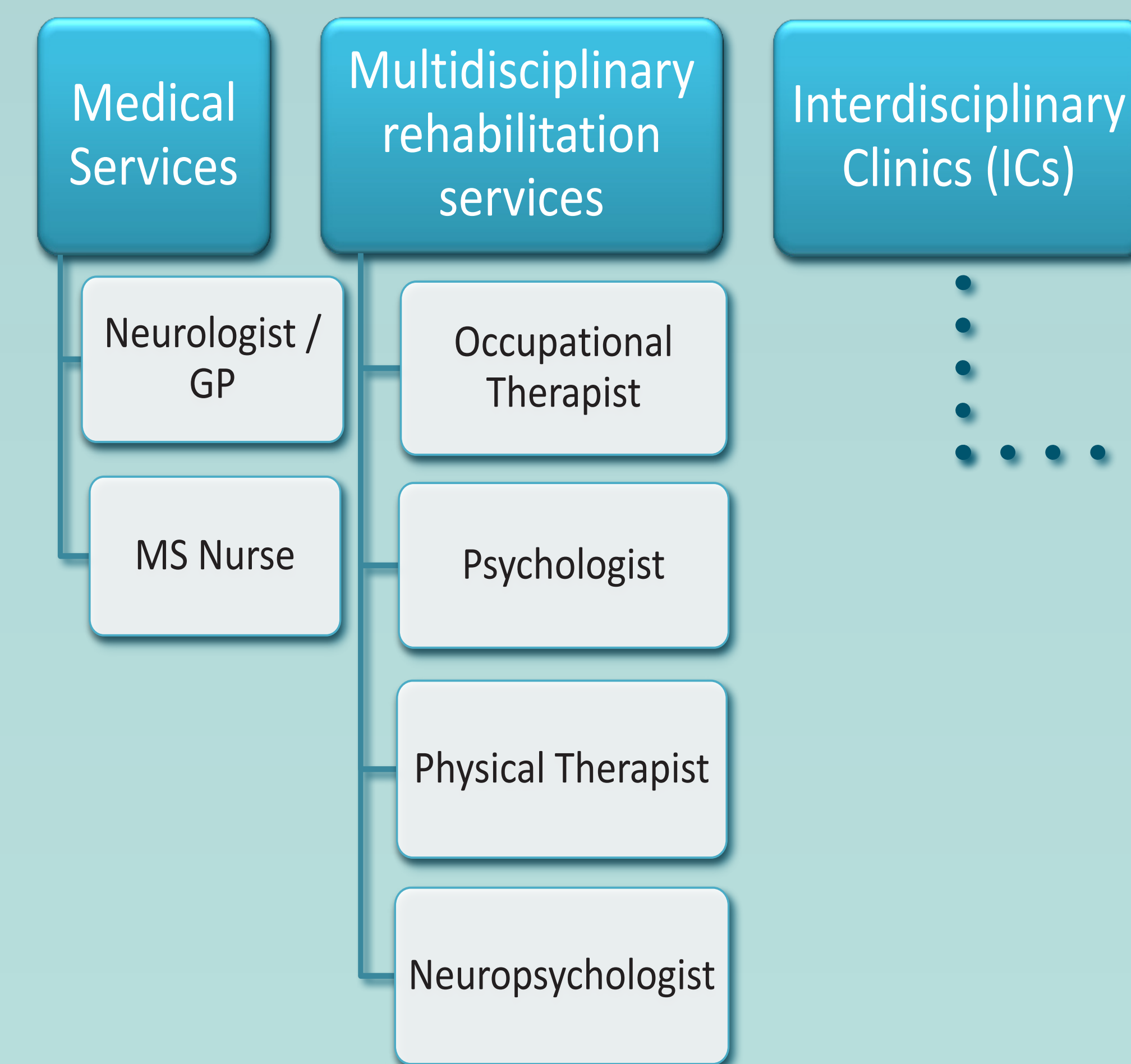
Caroline E. Rahn, B. Sc. PT  
IRDPQ Institut Universitaire de Réadaptation

## History

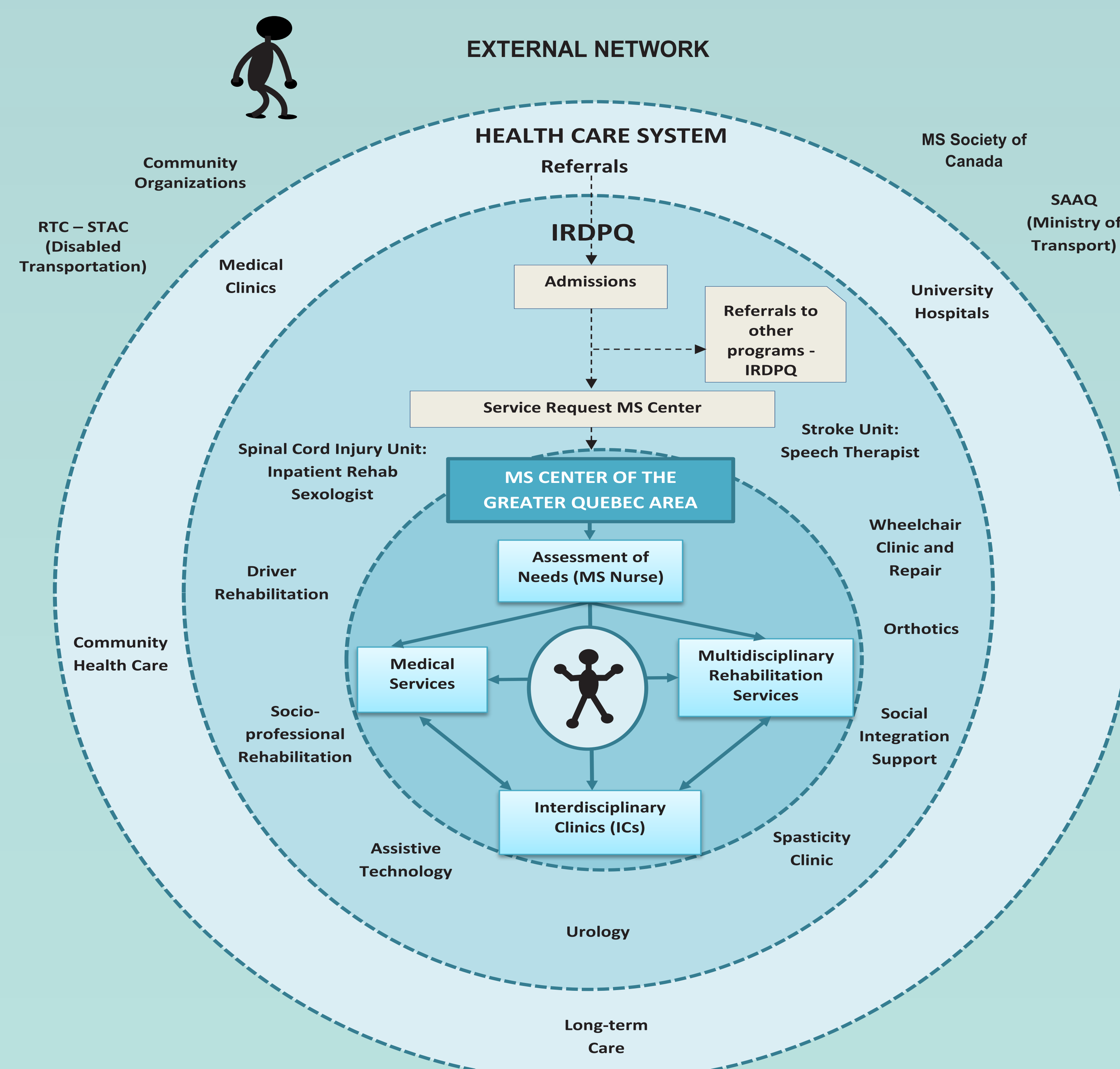
Established gradually over the past 25 years, the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Center of the Greater Quebec Area, at the IRDPQ Institut Universitaire de Réadaptation, in Quebec City, provides medical, rehabilitative and psychosocial services to 1400 patients, with 50 new patients being admitted each year. The high volume of patients presenting with evolving multidimensional needs, along with the desire to provide comprehensive, coordinated, patient-centered care were the catalysts that pushed the MS program to develop a unique concept of care: Interdisciplinary Clinics (ICs).

## Method

When admitted to the MS program, patients are initially screened by the MS nurse coordinator to evaluate their immediate needs. Newly diagnosed patients have access to a psychologist for support and coping skills. Subsequently, at any stage of their disease course and depending upon their current needs, patients can be directed towards:



## PATIENT PATHWAY



## Purpose

- Of the MS program :
- Prevent and treat MS symptoms at a medical level
  - Promote patient self-management and quality of life
  - Support social integration
  - Work closely with community resources to provide a seamless continuum of care

- Of the ICs :
- Efficiently identify and prioritize the patients' pharmacological, physical and functional needs
  - Prioritize interventions
  - Offer a concerted plan of action
  - Optimize available resources
  - Enhance patient quality of life

The ICs are held weekly and are usually offered to patients identified by the neurologists or the MS specialist nurses as having more complex rehabilitation needs. They consist of an hour-long joint assessment performed by a core multidisciplinary team composed of a neurologist or a general practitioner experienced in MS, an MS specialist nurse, an occupational therapist and a physical therapist. They include a medical review, a thorough questionnaire covering the patients' activities of daily living, a brief physical assessment, a neurological exam and, if needed, a wheelchair assessment. Many of the patients' needs can be met immediately, within the timeframe of the hour-long assessment. For items that require greater attention or other areas of expertise, referrals are made to the appropriate partners within the IRDPQ or to community organizations for further assessment and follow-up.

## Results

This comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach has proven to be beneficial on many levels. Therapists and doctors report great satisfaction in working as a team and appreciate the opportunity to determine common goals and to better understand the patients' overall rehabilitation needs. They also feel the ICs enhance interdisciplinary understanding between the different professions and that any follow-up interventions are better focused on the patients' overall needs. Furthermore, this approach eliminates unnecessary repetition of information allowing for a more efficient use of therapists' and patients' time, an important factor considering fatigue and mobility issues can make getting to appointments quite challenging. To date, patients have reported high satisfaction with the services they have received at the clinic, noting that they appreciate the availability of the staff and the comprehensive nature of the ICs.

## Conclusion

The weekly ICs provide coordinated, interdisciplinary services within the context of a larger MS program. They address the many and varying aspects of MS care in an efficient and timely manner thus contributing to the end goal of maximizing quality of life for people with MS.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all her colleagues at the MS Center for their support and advice, particularly Dr. François Émond, Denise Boucher, Line Boutin and Nathalie Dussault as well as Désirée Nsanzabera and Paule Dallaire for their help with the graphics and layout.