

# A Wellness Approach in Multiple Sclerosis Care; Integration of a Case Study

Kimberly Beckwith McGuire, Ph.D.

Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, West Orange, NJ

## Abstract

Physical, emotional, and cognitive factors affect overall functioning in multiple sclerosis (MS). Interventions addressing these factors may lead to improvement of overall quality of life for individuals with MS. A Wellness concept is a fairly new construct within medical care, receiving increased attention over the last 10 to 20 years. The biomedical model has been the predominant model of health care for most of the 20th century and into the 21st century. The biomedical model's focus is on physical causes of illness. The biopsychosocial model encompasses the biological model and expands on it to include the importance of considering the impact of psychological and social factors in medical illness. The wellness model discussed herein emphasizes that through gathering information and learning how to cope effectively with symptoms of a disease such as MS, the wellness model/approach is an important complement biological medical treatment.

## Background

Individuals diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) are faced with the challenge of living with the unpredictable process of a neurodegenerative disease. Psychological and social adaptation to this process can be optimized with adequate resources, support, and education. Accordingly, an outpatient wellness program was developed at the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation to address the specific biopsychosocial/spiritual needs of individuals living with MS. A case study is presented here to highlight the importance of a wellness approach in improving quality of life outcomes for individuals living with MS.

• **Objectives:** The overall aim of the wellness program was to improve quality of life experience by increasing awareness of the various social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual factors that can affect one's overall well-being.

## Methods

A biopsychosocial model and wellness approaches were used in the development and administration of the wellness program to 1) complement and support medical treatment, 2) teach individuals how to develop lifestyle strategies to enhance quality of living, and 3) put emphasis on personal responsibility. A 56-year-old African American female with a 20-year history of MS participated in a clinical diagnostic interview, a neuropsychological evaluation, and a 10-week Multiple Sclerosis Wellness Program, pre- and post-program self report questionnaires.

## Psychoeducational Group Topics

- Week 1: Mind/Body Interaction
- Week 2: Adjusting to Your Changing Self
- Week 3: Coping Mechanisms
- Week 4: Loss, Grief, and Spirituality
- Week 5: Managing Fatigue
- Week 6: Communication/Relationships- Part I
- Week 7: Communication/Relationships- Part II
- Week 8: Stress Management: Emotional Well Being
- Week 9: Cognitive Challenges
- Week 10: Review/Closure/Process

## Multiple Sclerosis Wellness Program: A Typical Day

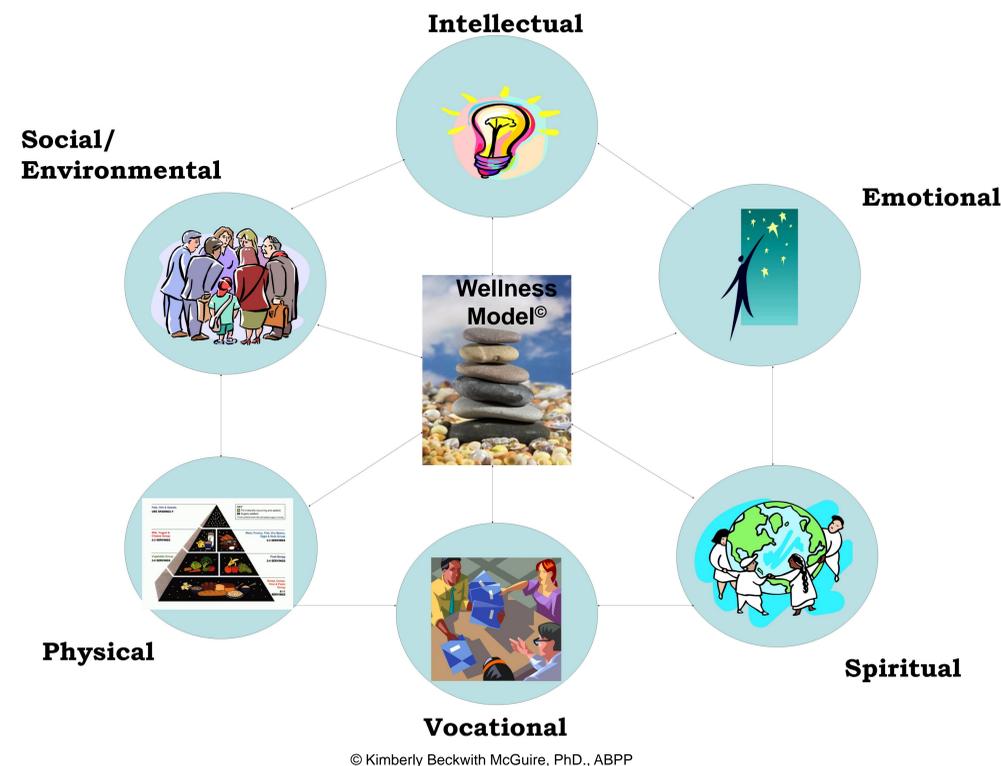
Week 8:	Forum	Topic	Time/Minutes	Identified Staff
10:00-11:20	Psychoeducational Group	Stress Management	90	Clinical Psychologist
11:20-11:30	Break		15	
11:30-12:30	Wellness	Yoga/Stretching/Pilates	45	Physical Therapist
12:30-1:00	Lunch		30	
1:00-2:00	Health and Wellbeing	Healthy Eating	60	Nutritionist/Dietician
2:00-3:00	Cognition	Cognitive Strategies	60	Cognitive Rehab Specialist

## Results

Self-report questionnaires from the Multiple Sclerosis Quality of Life Inventory (MSQLI) were administered at baseline (T1) and completion of the 10-week program (T2). Findings showed a decrease in self-report of anxiety, depression, pain experience, and perceived cognitive deficits from T1 to T2. Additionally, at completion of the program, this individual reported that she felt empowered and able to implement many of the skills and information she had gathered during the course of the program. Quotes from this individual reflecting the positive impact on her overall quality of life included the following: 1) "My quality of life has changed. I love it!" 2) "It was a spiritual connection of mind, body, and soul based on facts"; 3) "I now have tools for understanding my process of healing"; and 4) "It allowed me to understand the wide range of choices [available to me] about how to tackle the disease."

## What is Wellness?

- Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices towards, a more successful existence
- Wellness is positive and affirming; Proactive and preventative



Measure	T1	T2	Change	Interpretation
MHI Total Score <sup>1</sup>	67.78	84.44	↑ 16.66	Change from moderate to mild.
Depression (MHI subscale)	65	85	↑ 20.00	Change from moderate to mild depression.
Anxiety (MHI subscale)	56	80	↑ 24.00	Change from moderate to mild depression.
Pain Effects Scale <sup>2</sup>	15	8	↓ 07.00	Decrease from moderate to mild.
Perceived Cognitive Deficits <sup>3</sup>	12	9	↓ 03.00	Decrease from moderate to mild.

Mental Health Inventory (MHI) scoring range is 1-100. The lower the number the more the individual is experiencing the symptoms.

Pain Effects Scale (PES) scoring range is 6-30. The higher the number the greater the impact of pain on mood and behavior.

Perceived Deficits Questionnaire scoring range is 0-20. The higher the number, the greater the perceived deficit.

## Discussion

Wellness is a philosophy focused on empowerment, taking responsibility, and using a positive approach. Health-care professionals focused on how to increase the sense of control and quality of life for individuals living with MS can empower these individuals to integrate newly learned knowledge, coping strategies, and self-advocacy into their lives. This case study was primarily focused on discussing qualitative and functional outcomes as well as the importance of a multidisciplinary team approach to MS care.

## Letter from participant (56 year old African American female)

When I think about the Wellness Program at Kessler Institute, West Orange, NJ, it represents a [Life] "RAFT"© of life changes I [now] choose to embrace and execute in my daily life.

The workshop is a 10 week, well executed program. It allowed me to understand the wide range of choices about how to tackle the disease. There are many simple lifestyle changes that can significantly slow progression of my disease. The Wellness Program provided information through experiential activities.

My "raft" included understanding how the combination of [physical, emotional, spiritual, social] impact [on my well being and disease process]. Kessler's Wellness Program provided me with an evidence-based guide or reference material to be used beyond the 10 weeks. At any point when I recognize myself feeling slightly depressed, [I read through some of the strategies learned in the program].

I now have tools for understanding my process of healing. My personal well being means having tools to supplement my MS deficiencies. [Also], there was so much information learned from other [individuals with MS in the group]. [My awareness has increased based on interactions] with the group members and workshop presenters. I now have the courage to face MS head on; by using my various well being strategies. The Wellness Model works!

My quality of life has changed and I love it! It was a spiritual connection of mind, body and soul based on facts.

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