

# SELF-REPORTED PERSONAL IMPACT OF MS WELLNESS PROGRAMS

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# BACKGROUND

- Wellness focused behaviors and lifestyle choices have long been of significant interest for people with MS
  - MS Navigator inquiries
  - Social Media tracking
- The National MS Society has made wellness a priority including:
  - Programs (e.g., webinar series, Resilience video, yoga, aquatics, mindfulness, nutrition programs)
  - Information and Resources (e.g., web content, Wellness Discussion Guide)
  - Research (e.g. impact of diet, exercise, stress management)

# BACKGROUND

- As evidence supporting the benefits of lifestyle and wellness interventions for people with MS increases, so too does the need for people living with MS to gain access to effective wellness information and programs
- Specifically, interventions focused on wellness topics such as physical activity and mindfulness can improve quality of life and reduce depression and fatigue and possibly effect disease modification and progression  
Focusing on a self-empowerment model with MS can be a highly effective approach

# BACKGROUND

The Society offers programs that vary in delivery and content (e.g., yoga, aquatics, mindfulness, fitness), yet share a common goal of addressing one or more of the dimensions of wellness and aim to enlighten (increase knowledge), encourage (increase self-efficacy) and empower (increase skills) participants to engage in behaviors and make personal choices that support health and wellness.



# Dimensions of Wellness

- Diet, Exercise and Healthy Behaviors
- Emotional Well-being
- Work and Home
- Spiritual Well-being
- Cognition and Intellectual Well-being
- Relationships and Social Well-being

# METHOD

- A self-reported, retrospective survey was delivered electronically.
- Approximately 250 wellness focused programs across the country were delivered by local Society offices with a convenience sample of 1,142 completing the post survey.
- Outcomes assessed:
  - University of Washington Self-efficacy scale (UW-SES; Amtmann et al., 2012);
  - Stress (4 question Health Distress Subscale, from Multiple Sclerosis Quality of Life (MSQOL)-54 instrument; Vickrey et al., 1995).
  - 2 questions created by the Society addressing confidence in improving personal wellness and overall health.
  - Additional satisfaction, program usage and behavior change questions.
- Any wellness-focused Society program delivered from Jan 2016 - Jan 2017 was eligible for the current study.

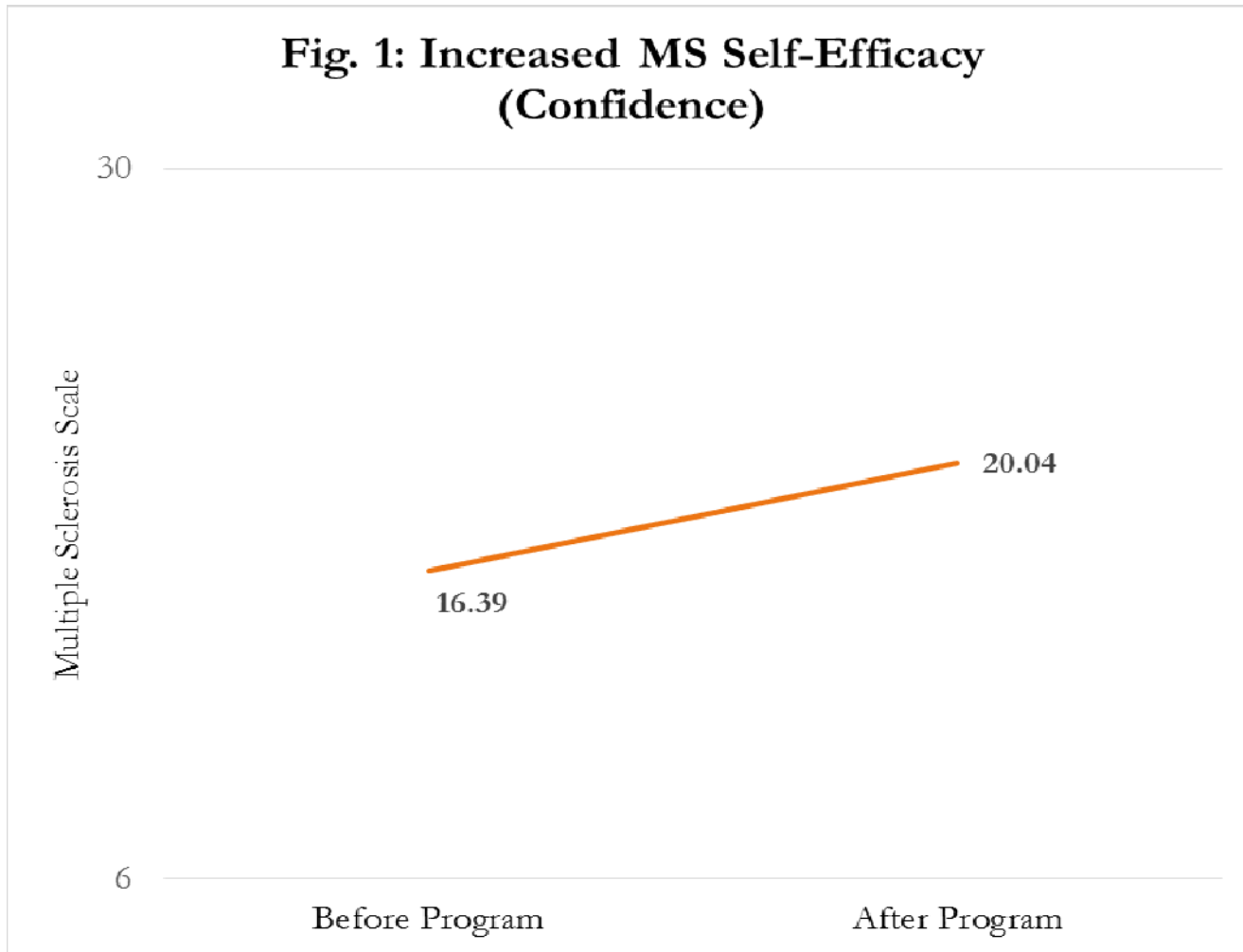
<b>Society Wellness Participant Demographics (N=1142)</b>		
<b>Relationship to MS (N=1142):</b>		
person with MS		75%
partner/other		25%
<b>Age (N=816):</b>		
Mean/SD		55.10 years (12.59)
<b>Gender (N=1070):</b>		
% Female		80%
<b>Years Diagnosed (N=768):</b>		
11+ years		64%
<b>Ethnic heritage (N=230):</b>		
White		67%
Black or African-American		24%
<b>Level of disability (N=763):</b>		
Mild disability		24%
Moderate disability		53%
Significant disability		18%
<b>Type of program (N=776):</b>		
one day		50%
multi-day		50%

# OUTCOMES:

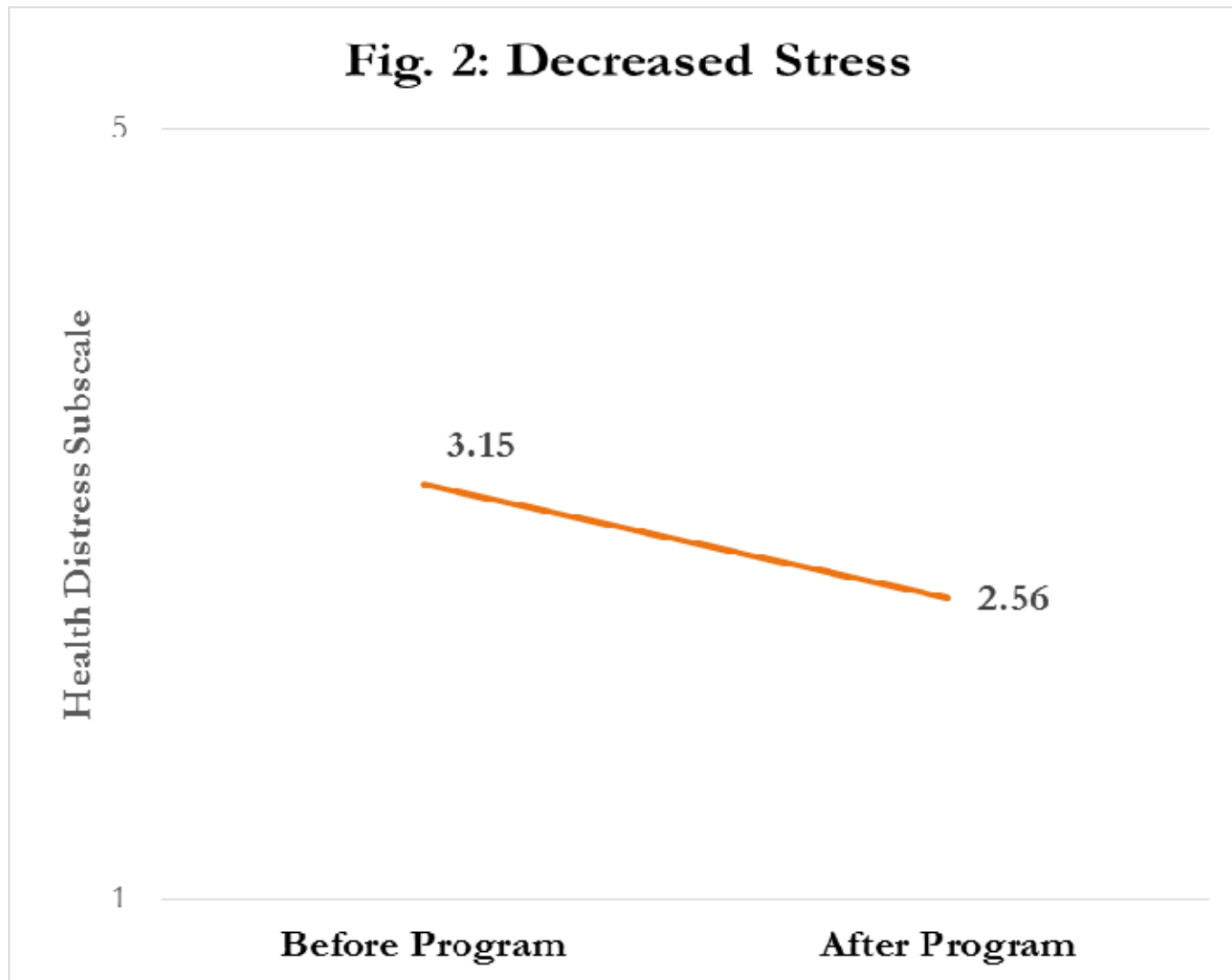
- Participants reported impact on a number of health and wellness constructs after participating in various Society wellness programs:
  - Significant increase in MS specific self-efficacy (Fig. 1; MSSE;  $F(1, 288) = 149.77, p < .05$ )
  - A significant decrease in perceived stress (Fig. 2; Health Distress Subscale;  $F(1, 322) = 195.20, p < .05$ )
  - 83% of participants reported intention to or initiation of positive behavior change due to program participation (Fig. 3).



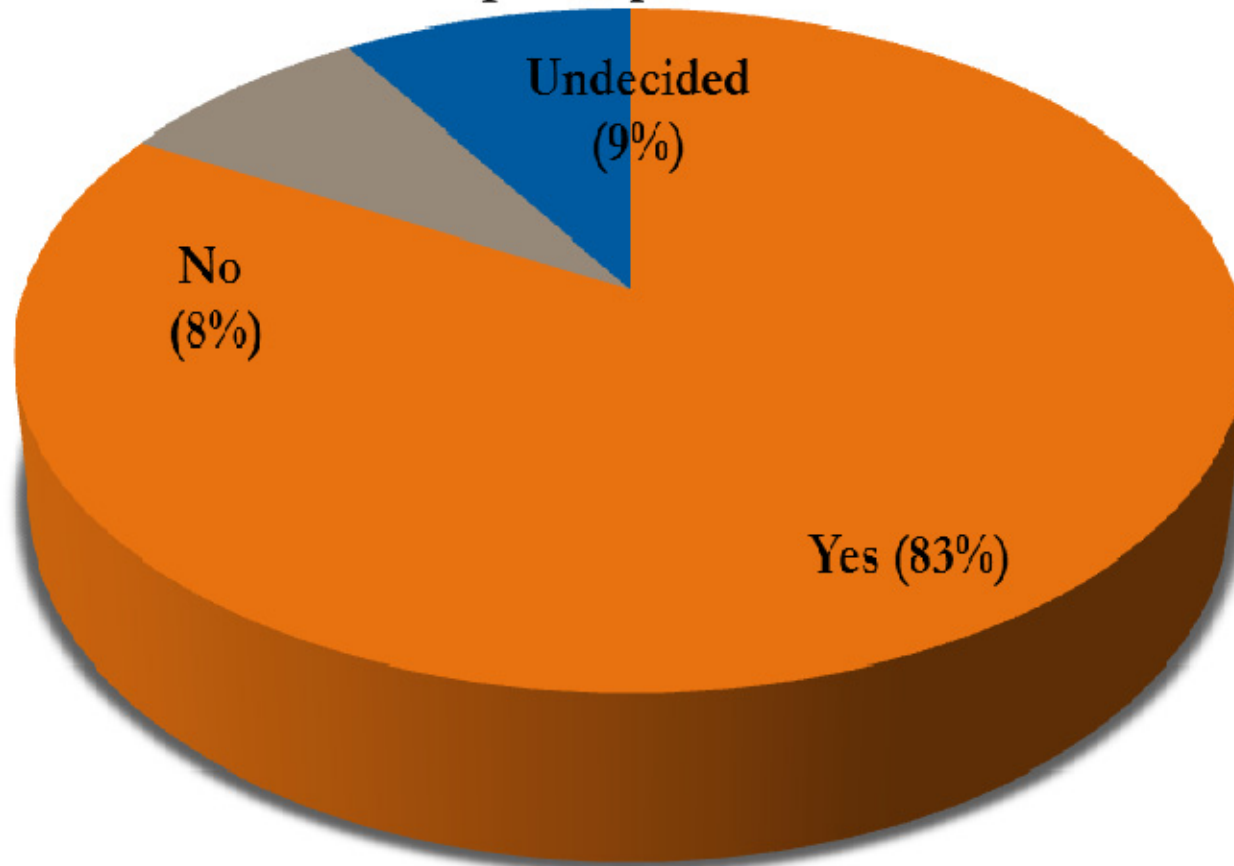
**Fig. 1: Increased MS Self-Efficacy  
(Confidence)**



**Fig. 2: Decreased Stress**



**Fig. 3: Behavior change due to program participation**



# ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

- Significant improvements in self-reported overall health and confidence in improving personal wellness were reported ( $p < .05$ )
- Participants gained usable knowledge in wellness areas of diet & exercise (51%), emotional well-being (45%), and relationships (39%)
- Additional findings include feelings of increased support (72%), knowledge of new MS resources (78%) and feeling more connected to the Society (84%)

# LIMITATIONS

- Convenience sample
- Multiple interventions
- Outcomes not analyzed relative to specific interventions
- Before/After survey design

# Conclusions

- Improvements in MS specific self-efficacy and stress were found along with reports of improved overall health, behavior change, empowerment and program satisfaction.
- Increased self-efficacy is linked to quality of life and fewer depressive symptoms and may translate to improved self-perception of quality of life.
- Although causal interpretation is not possible due to the current design, the impact reported on valid and reliable constructs in addition to reports of behavior change is notable.

# Conclusions, cont.

- The programs included in this study varied widely, however, interventions focused on wellness and mindfulness may benefit participants by helping them to accept daily challenges and recognize thoughts and feelings, allowing for acceptance and self-care to develop.
- The group setting of many of these programs along with the teaching of usable wellness/lifestyle skills and resources is also believed to play a role in impact.
- Experience shows that wellness programs, designed to enlighten, encourage and/or empower, delivered in the community, can stimulate a desire for behavior change or actual behavior change in one or more dimensions of wellness.
- Research about the impact of specific wellness interventions as well as the need to better understand how to most effectively facilitate long-term behavior change is needed.

“I feel the MS Wellness Program has made a big change in the way I can live with MS. I feel more self-confident with what I can do. It keeps me in the best condition I can be with physical problems due to MS.”  
A wellness program participant

“The program offered has had a tremendous positive impact on my daily living.”  
A wellness program participant





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