

Title:

The Image of MS

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Summary:

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Article Body:

What does multiple sclerosis (MS) look like? The answer is not simple. However, a new photo exhibit is challenging public perceptions about MS, and helping put the disease in focus. In doing so, the exhibit is meant to encourage those with symptoms of MS to seek early diagnosis and treatment.

The exhibit, called "The Image of MS," was photographed by famed photographer Joyce Tenneson and was recently on display at New York City's Grand Central Terminal. According to Tenneson, the 27 photographs capture the "grace and courage in the everyday existence of people with MS."

The exhibit is slated to visit several hometowns of the participants and can also be viewed at www.ImageofMS.com. Symptoms of MS vary from person to person and can include fatigue, vision problems, weakness, numbness, tingling, stiffness, dizziness, loss of bladder control and slurred speech.

Among the 27 participants is Cindy Heitmann, 48, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., who more than a decade ago was diagnosed with MS after awakening one morning unable to move. Suddenly, the nurse of 20 years also became a patient. It took months of testing before doctors were able to finally diagnose her with MS.

Says Heitmann, who now travels the country encouraging others with MS to take control of their lives: "When someone looks at me, I want them to see me as a mom, as a wife, as a nurse, as someone who's positive and supportive and active. I don't want MS to stop me from doing anything."

"MS is a potentially debilitating disease, so we need to strive to diagnose and treat it earlier to help halt or slow the damage," said Barry G. W. Arnason, M.D., professor of neurology at the University of Chicago. "We need the public

to be aware of the early symptoms and understand that treatments available today can help slow disease activity and help prevent the appearance of symptoms."

The "Image of MS" campaign is sponsored by Berlex, Inc., marketers of Betaseron®, a medication indicated for the treatment of relapsing forms of MS to reduce the frequency of clinical exacerbations. There is no cure for MS. The introduction of Betaseron in 1993 heralded a new era in the treatment of relapsing forms of MS. The most commonly reported adverse reactions for Betaseron are lymphopenia, injection site reaction, asthenia, flu-like symptom complex, headache and pain.