

The Need for MS Awareness and Education

Over the last month, people across the country have been working to educate others on Multiple Sclerosis (MS). March is National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month, a nationwide effort to raise the public's awareness of the unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system.

Elly Fennell is an advance practice nurse and adult clinical nurse specialist at the MS Center at OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute. She says there are many misconceptions about the disease, and hopes raising awareness will help others realize MS is not a one-size-fits-all diagnosis.

"There's a lot of varying levels of the disease. Some people think of multiple sclerosis for example of people in a wheelchair, but some people are walking around and you don't even know they have MS, so somebody who is diagnosed with MS, it doesn't mean a really bad sentence for them or trajectory. They may do very well," explained Elly Fennell, APN, ACNS, OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute.

A heightened awareness is more important now than ever before. A new [study](#) conducted by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society found the number of people living with MS is now estimated at nearly 1 million in the United States. This is more than twice the long-standing estimate of 400,000.

The study was [published](#) in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

This new data could help researchers have a better understanding of MS and provides tools to do more studies to look at environmental triggers. The data also spotlights the need for more and better care.

"It's very important to continue the funding with different research studies and trials and that the funding go for that because there's emerging therapies, there's emerging research coming there for many different things in MS in the future, even with blood testing," said Fennell. She continued, "More simple for MS even. Some blood testing that's coming out possibly in the future that can diagnose MS without having to do a lumbar puncture for example."

The OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute Multiple Sclerosis Center is designated by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society as a [Center for Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care](#).

For more information about the Multiple Sclerosis Center at OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute, click [here](#).