

Multiple Sclerosis Clinical Trial Launches at OSF INI (Print)

More than one million people in the United States live with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), a chronic neurological disease that affects the brain, spinal cord and nerves to the eyes.

"It can present in a variety of ways like vision loss, double vision, weakness, or numbness on one side or both sides of the body," says Tiffani Franada, DO, a neurologist with the OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute (INI) who specializes in the autoimmune disease.

"Typically (multiple sclerosis) presents in young patients between 20 and 50 years of age. It's more common in women than men," Dr. Franada says. These events are called attacks or relapses, and they last a few weeks and then they get better. Patients can go awhile without anything, and then they can get other attacks down the line."

The OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute has launched a [clinical trial](#) for patients with nonrelapsing secondary progressive MS (nrSPMS). Dr. Franada and her team are looking for further preventive treatments. The trial, sponsored by [Sanofi](#), uses an antibody called [frexalimab](#), to see if it delays the progression in those enrolled.

"It's a disease state with no current treatment options available," Dr. Franada adds. "We are actively enrolling right now. The age range is between 18-60 years of age for patients with secondary progressive MS that's not active. This is different than the relapsing remitting phase, which is the most common. This comes after that phase."

While some patients currently in the OSF INI clinic are candidates for the clinical trial, Dr. Franada and her team are looking to include patients outside the clinic as well.

People interested in the clinical trial can call OSF INI at (309) 624-4000 to learn more information.

Multiple Sclerosis treatment options

There are 20 disease-modifying therapies to prevent disease activity in MS, Dr. Franada says. "Some treatments are given by IV, some are given by mouth, and some are given as at-home injections. It just depends on what is right for that individual."

Dr. Franada says if someone has an MS attack, the team wants to know about it right away. Adding that treatment of MS is more effective when it's started early.

"There are some acute treatments that can be given, typically in the hospital. But prevention is a mainstay of our treatment course for patients."

Prevention tips

"Getting good sleep at night (is important), about eight hours. Getting regular exercise, about 30 minutes 5 days per week. In fact, exercise helps increase levels of BDNF, which is one of the hormones in our body that helps with neurological repair, called remyelination," Dr. Franada says. "The problem in MS is stripping away the covering of the nerve, demyelination, so exercise helps the reparative process. We don't know what the best diet for MS is, but I usually encourage my patients to focus on a Mediterranean diet, which is heart healthy."

Knowing family history is also important to assess your risk factor of getting the disease.

"The risk for developing MS is a combination of genetics and environment, it's not just one. If you have a family member who lives with an autoimmune disease, or MS, it does slightly increase your risk for developing the disease," Dr. Franada says.

Hydration is paramount, as is stress reduction. "Exercise is a great way to manage stress."

"Your brain sits in a pool of fluid, so we want to hydrate as much as possible," Dr. Franada says.

If you know a family member has MS, there are things you can do to lessen your risk.

"That includes Vitamin D supplementation. If you're low in Vitamin D, it's critical to supplement that to a normal level. Also, smoking cessation. If you're a smoker, we advise you to quit. But this is incredibly important for patients with MS, because smokers are more likely to develop the disease," Dr. Franada says.

National recognition of the disease has gone up, Dr. Franada says, which drives more patients to the OSF Illinois Neurological Institute.

While there is no cure for MS, there are treatment options available to help with day-to-day symptoms (fatigue, pain and cognitive issues).

For more information on OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute, visit the OSF HealthCare [website](#).