



The Parkinsonism Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Parkinson's New Zealand is a not for profit organisation that offers support, education and information to people living with Parkinsonism conditions, their families, carers and health professionals. Parkinson's New Zealand has divisions and support groups nationwide.

We can offer:

- ✦ Information on Parkinson's and Parkinsonism conditions including MSA
- ✦ Regular up-to-date information through our national magazine, website and local newsletters
- ✦ Responsible reporting of recent research
- ✦ Books and audio-visual material
- ✦ Local meetings and education programmes
- ✦ Advice on health and welfare assistance available
- ✦ Support from a professional Field Officer in your area
- ✦ Fellowship and support



Parkinson's New Zealand is reliant on funding from grants, bequests and donations. Your support is welcome!

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An introduction to Multiple System Atrophy Disorders (MSA)

February 2008 - Designed by Gibson Rusden

www.parkinsons.org.nz



Multiple System Atrophy Disorders (MSA)

What is MSA?

Multiple system atrophy disorders (MSA) are a group of related syndromes that make up a rare progressive neurological disorder presenting with similar symptoms to Parkinson's disease. The condition is marked by a combination of symptoms affecting movement, blood pressure, and other body functions; hence the label multiple system atrophy.

Various forms of MSA

Symptoms of MSA vary from person to person. Because of this, three different diseases were initially described to encompass this range of MSA symptoms: Shy-Drager syndrome, striatonigral degeneration, and olivopontocerebellar atrophy.

What causes MSA?

The cause of MSA is unknown.

Symptoms of MSA?

MSA can cause a wide range of symptoms, including:

- ✦ A fall in blood pressure when standing (orthostatic hypotension), causing dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, or blurred vision
- ✦ Male impotence
- ✦ Loss of control of bowel or bladder
- ✦ Stiffness or rigidity
- ✦ Slowed movements
- ✦ Loss of balance; lack of coordination
- ✦ Speech and swallowing difficulties

Mental Health

Studies have not been done that can tell us how often mental health problems occur in the MSA disorders. However, we know that some people with people with MSA may experience depression and/or anxiety and may develop a dementia. Hallucinations seem to be less common than for other similar illnesses. A loss of motivation may develop. Additionally, adjusting to the presence of various symptoms or losses of independence is very challenging and people will benefit from support when it is hard to cope.

Who gets MSA?

MSA usually starts in people aged 50-60, although it can affect people younger and older than this. Around 4 in 100,000 people are affected by MSA in New Zealand. MSA does not appear to be hereditary and is not infectious or contagious. It is a sporadic disorder that occurs at random.

How is MSA diagnosed?

The diagnosis may be difficult. MSA is often mistaken for Parkinson's, especially in the early stages of the condition. Diagnosis should be made by a specialist, usually a Neurologist. A period of observation is often needed before making a firm diagnosis. There is no specific test for the disease.

What is the treatment?

People with MSA may benefit from working with a multi disciplinary team that could include Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists, Dieticians, Continence Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Parkinson's New Zealand Field Officers.

Currently there is no specific treatment for MSA. A variety of medications, including some drugs used for Parkinson's, and other forms of therapy can help control the symptoms.

What is the prognosis?

MSA is a progressive disorder but the rate of progression is variable.

To the person with MSA and their family

The diagnosis of MSA has significant impact on those close to the person with MSA. Progressive disability results in an increasing need for care and support. Carers and families may feel isolated, frustrated and chronically tired. Support services can be contacted directly or referral can be made through your doctor, health professional or Parkinson's New Zealand Field Officer.

Further resources on the Internet

Further information about MSA is available on the Internet; the following sites may be of interest:

www.msaweb.co.uk

www.neurosy.org/disease/msa/msa

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000757.htm

www.neurologychannel.com/msa

