



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

MS Research Program at the Department of Defense

Request: Fund the MSRP at \$20 million for fiscal year 2022

MS in Veterans and Active-Duty Service Members

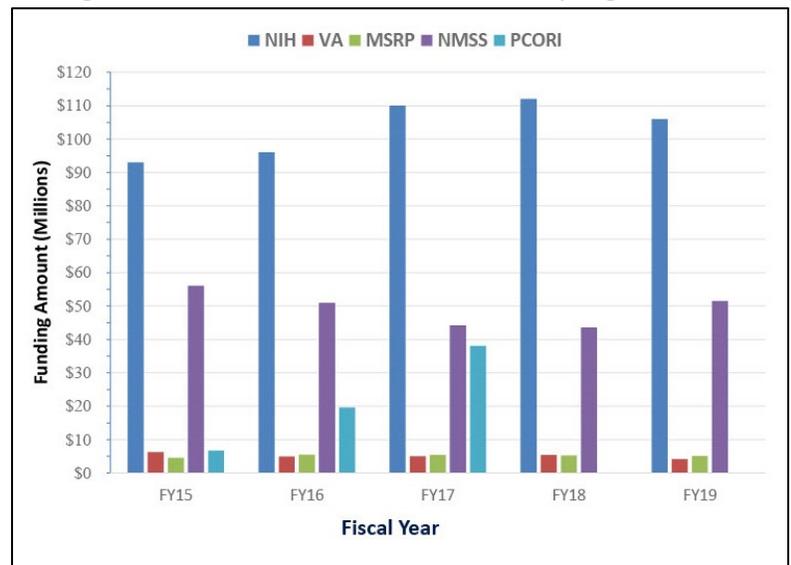
- Nearly 70,000 American veterans live with MS.ⁱ
- Between 2007-2017, over 2,000 active-duty service members and 600 National Guard/ Reserve members were diagnosed with MS.ⁱⁱ
- Over half of veterans with MS seen by the Veterans Health Administration have “service-connected” MS.

MS Research Program (MSRP) at the Department of Defense

- Congress established the MSRP in fiscal year (FY) 2009 and it is the only federal funding stream specifically for MS research.
- MSRP funds high-impact, high-risk research based on the input from people with MS.
- From FY09-FY19 the MSRP funded 111 awards, 98 projects, 4 clinical trials and 3 patents.
- \$20 million for the MSRP in FY22 will ensure the greatest return on investment in the program and maintain funding consistency for MS researchers.

Partnership in MS Research

- The Society is a strategic partner with federal partners to:
 - to identify research gaps
 - reduce unnecessary research duplication
 - leverage complementary research efforts.
- To date, the Society has funded over \$1.06 billion in MS research.



What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?

- MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system.
- The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted.
- Nearly 1 million people in the United States live with MS.

We work with all companies, organizations and individuals that share our mission. On average, financial support from pharmaceutical companies over the last three years has accounted for less than 4% of Society funds. The Society independently develops public policy positions on issues that are important to people affected by MS.

MS Research Funding Fuels Innovative Treatments

Research in the lab leads to real-life breakthroughs for those living with MS.



Yvette Brisco

A U.S. Army Reserve veteran and former AmeriCorps volunteer, Yvette Brisco joined the estimated 70,000 veterans in the U.S. who live with MS when she was diagnosed in 2014 at the age of 43. “When everyone was gone, and I was alone in my hospital room, I took a moment to cry, knowing that with that one pronouncement, my life would forever be changed,” she shares.

But Yvette made a decision to fight: “I fight to live better. I fight to hold on to who I am as an individual. I also fight for a cure.” When asked to serve as a peer reviewer for Multiple Sclerosis Research Program (MSRP), she jumped at the opportunity.

The MSRP is part of the larger Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program that are administered by the Department of Defense. It is the only federal funding stream specifically for MS research and its mission is set by people living with MS. “My experience as a peer reviewer allows me to give my perspective, and the perspective of the MS community.”

Past increased Congressional investment has allowed the program to fund more innovative research, which must continue to provide continuity for the research community as they work to find a cure. The high-risk, high-reward nature of proposals funded by the MSRP showed Yvette just how committed researchers are to finding solutions for people with MS. “These researchers want to find a cure. They’re also working hard to develop solutions for people in the meantime while we wait for a cure.”

Dr. Leigh E. Charvet, director of MS research and professor of neurology at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, is one of those researchers looking for solutions for people with MS. She has pioneered studies on the use of noninvasive brain stimulation using a telehealth approach to reach participants at home. Using what is called remotely supervised transcranial direct current stimulation (RS-tDCS), low-grade electric currents are passed through a headset to safely stimulate the brain during rehabilitative exercises.



Leigh Charvet, PhD

Dr. Charvet and her team are evaluating many applications for this treatment, including managing fatigue and cognitive impairment. Thanks to the MSRP grant, the team is studying how this treatment could help rehabilitate impaired hand functioning and specifically among people with progressive subtypes. As the treatment can be administered remotely, this work is paving the way for increasing access to care and rehabilitation for people with MS.

Without consistent funding for the MSRP, these types of innovative high-risk, high-reward studies are in danger of going unfunded. It is critical that Congress continue its \$20 million investment in the MSRP to drive new solutions that will change the lives of people with MS.

¹ Wallin, M. T., Culpepper, W. J., Campbell, J. D., Nelson, L. M., Langer-Gould, A., Marrie, R. A., Cutter, G. R., Kaye, W. E., Wagner, L., Tremlett, H., Buka, S. L., Dilokthornsakul, P., Topol, B., Chen, L. H., & LaRocca, N. G. (2019). The prevalence of MS in the United States. *Neurology*, 92(10), e1029–e1040. <https://doi.org/10.1212/wnl.00000000000007035>

² Williams VF, Stahlman S, Ying S. 2017. Multiple sclerosis among service members of the active and reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces and among other beneficiaries of the Military Health System, 2007-2016. *MSMR Aug*; 24(8): 2-11