



National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society

## MS STEP UP Program for Doctor of Physical Therapy Students

The MS Standardized Training and Education Program (STEP UP) was developed to address the scarcity of physical therapists with advanced training in the assessment and treatment of people with MS. An enhancement to the Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT) curriculum, the MS STEP UP program includes MS-focused curriculum, clinical experiences, and community service activities.

The National MS Society supports DPT students with 2-year scholarships at the following universities:

- **University of North Carolina**: Directed by Prue Plummer, PT, PhD  
The MS STEP UP program at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill was established in 2008. Sixteen students have graduated from the program, of which 7 have attained MS specialist certification and 2 have completed neurologic PT residency training.
- **University of South Florida**: Directed by Jeannie Stephenson, PT, PhD, NCS  
The MS STEP UP program at the University of South Florida (USF) has had 8 students since 2014; 4 have graduated and are either working in neurorehabilitation or are in neurologic residency training. USF MS Scholars provide the MS Society's Free from Falls program each summer and 4 scholars have presented posters at the Consortium of MS Centers Annual Meeting.
- **University of Kansas**: Co-directed by Katie Siengsukon, PT, PhD and Stacia Troshynski-Brown, PT, DPT, MSCS  
The most recently developed MS STEP UP program is at the University of Kansas Medical Center. The program was started in the fall of 2017 and currently has 4 first year DPT students participating in the program.

*I am honored to have been a part of the UNC MS STEP UP Scholarship program. I want to bring back hope to the lives of people with MS and help them find ways to rediscover the activities they love. I strive to be a part of the health care team that serves people who have MS. Physical therapy plays a powerful role in the*

*management of symptoms and fighting to maintain the independence that patients strive for ... I know that my preparation through this program will allow me to excel in making a lifetime of positive impact.*

*(MS STEP UP Alum)*

*Through the knowledge and skills that I gained from MS STEP UP, I hope to find ways to improve access to MS-specific services for patients who live in remote areas and to promote approaches to therapy that not only address physical health, but also support mental and emotional health in patients with this chronic disease. I am deeply inspired by these patients and hope to serve them throughout my PT career.*

*(MS STEP UP Alum)*

Embedded in the Society's strategic plan and in the Society's Access to Quality MS Healthcare Principles is the growth and support of a knowledgeable MS healthcare workforce. The MS STEP UP program has been successful in attracting new rehabilitation professionals to the field, developing the clinical MS leaders of the future and enhancing MS knowledge—thus improving access to quality care.

While the disease course cannot be altered by rehabilitation, a growing body of evidence indicates that improvement in mobility, activities of daily living (ADL), quality of life, prevention of complications, reduction in health care utilization, and gains in safety and independence, may be realized by a carefully planned program of exercise, functional training, and activities that address the specific needs of the individual. Rehabilitation is considered a necessary component of comprehensive, quality health care for people with MS, at all stages of the disease. - Society Rehabilitation Recommendations in MS

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