

February 14th, 2022

Dear Kin Canada District 7,

Happy 2022! It's that time of year again when we look back on the accomplishments of the previous year – thanks to incredible donors like you. It was another challenging one but with your generous support, we made great strides in MS research and continued to support our MS community.

A look back at some highlights from 2021

- A North American **COVID-19 & MS registry** called [COViMS](#) was established in response to the novel coronavirus to understand how people with MS and other allied conditions fare following infection and to identify risk factors associated with worse outcomes. Researchers identified several risk factors for people with MS – these were increased disability, older age, Black race, cardiovascular comorbidities, anti-CD20 disease-modifying therapies, and recent corticosteroid treatment. Comorbidities (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, and obesity) were identified as a key risk factor for worse outcomes for those with neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorders (NMOSD).
- The **1:1 Peer Support Program** matched 212 individuals living with or affected by MS with a volunteer to answer specific questions or to discuss issues related to MS. This important telephone and internet-based program connects people with a volunteer who has had similar lived experience with MS to help them navigate their journey.
- In July of 2021, the MS Society launched its full **Annual Research Competition** which will provide up to an additional **\$5.5 million** in funding to support innovative research in MS and the next generation of MS researchers. With decisions to be announced in early 2022, the Competition will add to our existing portfolio of **56** research grants and research training support for **45** trainees.
- Dr. Douglas Arnold at McGill University is utilizing **artificial intelligence** to learn from clinical and MRI data gathered from over 10,000 people who participated in MS clinical trials over the last 20 years to make better predictions on the risk of future relapses and increases in disability. Learnings will be further tested and developed with real-world data gathered from MS clinics. This work will provide the basis of a clinical decision support tool for use by clinicians and people living with MS to make better, more personalized treatment decisions.
- Dr. Soheila Karimi at the University of Manitoba provided evidence for the involvement of Neuroregulin-1 beta 1 in MS pathology, as an **early disease marker** for MS as well as a potential targeted therapy to delay onset of MS disease and alleviate disease severity and progression. Dr. Karimi's work continues to evaluate the therapeutic potential of Neuroregulin-1 beta 1.

- **Dr. Anastassia Voronova** at the University of Alberta provided evidence for the role of a novel immunological molecule called fractalkine that can enhance production of oligodendrocytes – the only myelin-forming cells in the brain. With limited treatment options available for progressive MS, there is a need for new therapeutics that can regenerate and restore damaged myelin – fractalkine is a novel candidate for further study.
- Navigating information about MS can be overwhelming. The **MS Knowledge Network** helps anyone affected by MS, no matter where they live in Canada, get hands-on guidance in both English and French. This year, our highly trained MS Navigators served 9,032 Canadians from across the country. French language service within the MS Knowledge Network was also increased with the addition of a third bilingual Navigator to better serve our community.
- Dr. Jennifer Gommerman at the University of Toronto was **one of 19 awardees** announced by the [International Progressive MS Alliance](#) as part of the [Research Challenge Awards](#), a worldwide call for applications to understand novel mechanisms involved in progressive MS. Dr. Gommerman aims to use imaging mass cytometry to provide a complete inventory of the components of the innate immune system in the progressive MS brain to understand all of the factors and the changes that occur, and correlate the findings with clinical data.
- The Quality of Life Grant Program provided safety and mobility equipment to 2044 Canadians with MS, and spending \$442,892.40 nationwide. In the Atlantic provinces, staff responded to 476 cases from 364 individuals, spending \$77,357.53 to support their equipment needs.

“Very pleased with the Quality of Life Equipment. Found the staff very helpful and friendly.”
 – Grant recipient from Atlantic Canada.

Our achievements are your achievements because our work doesn't happen without you. We are deeply grateful for your compassion and support of those living with and affected by MS.

Thank you for supporting our vision of a world free of MS—and for being such a valued part of the MS community.

With gratitude,



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P.S. We recently launched our [Donor Impact Corner](#), a place for us to highlight our community of MS Society donors and the work you make possible. We hope you'll check it out. If you'd like to share your story, please let me know. We would be so pleased to inspire others through your generosity.

P.P.S. For more information on 2021 MS research projects, including videos, please visit our [MS Blog](#).