

# R

Keeping **Multiple Support Program** Members Connected

# endezvous

Winter 2008, Volume 8, Issue 1

*Tackling Mount Everest  
from a wheelchair*

*Myelin repair in mice  
– Are humans next?*

*How to set goals – and  
reach them: Where most  
of us go wrong*

*PLUS: Tips for healthy  
eating and getting fit*

A bodybuilding  
**champion**

talks workouts, awards, and  
working through relapses



Multiple Support Program

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*Rendezvous Winter 2008, Volume 8, Issue 1*



# Rendezvous Gets Active

Keeping active with MS is the theme we explore in this issue of *Rendezvous*, and I know that for many people that sounds like an oxymoron. How can you think about exercising when you're exhausted and your limbs are tingling or numb? But this is exactly the time when I need to get active, whether it's taking a short walk, riding my bike, or even just stretching.

I firmly believe that we must keep active and keep working our muscles – even when they are not working so well for us. If we stop exercising, our muscles can atrophy and, when the MS symptoms



## What's New

I firmly believe that we must keep active and keep working our muscles – even when they are not working so well for us



Photography by Kevin Sprekmeester

improve, it will be that much harder to get back into a routine. When that happens, the line between having MS symptoms and just being out of shape blurs.

I'm not an athlete and don't even have a structured workout routine. I do what I can, when I can, but always ensure it's something I enjoy so it doesn't feel like a chore. Among my most treasured pastimes is escaping to a special, secluded spot on the Credit River with my husband, Sean, our daughter, Ariel, and our Wheaten Terriers, Kyle and Daisy. In winter, I enjoy cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and long walks followed up with a nice mug of hot chocolate, as well as swimming and snorkelling at the cottage in the summer. Being active, coupled with getting plenty of rest and eating healthy foods, has had a marvelous effect on me. I'm hitting a milestone birthday in a few weeks, and to be honest I haven't felt this good in years!

In this issue you may be inspired by Brent Felstead, a competitive bodybuilder, or by Pippa Blake, who is fulfilling her lifelong dream of trekking in the Himalayas. These amazing individuals have certainly proven that having MS does not mean you stop living. Although I am not about to embark on these types of quests, Felstead and Blake both show that you can stay fit and still partake in the activities you've always enjoyed. And check out the interview with Dr. Richard Koestner, which will help you set

realistic goals, whether that means being more active, staying on track with your therapy, or achieving a personal aspiration even if you have failed before.

In this issue, you'll also notice we bring you a few changes and some new departments. We especially hope you enjoy a fun fitness challenge, and the latest in MS research and news.

Enjoy this informative and action-packed edition of *Rendezvous*. I am thrilled to be back as editor this year and know that we can all stay active and live the best lives that we can. As I always say: "I may have MS but it certainly does not have me."<sup>TM</sup>

Marla Zaichick  
Editor

We welcome your comments. Please send to:

Letters to the Editor – *Rendezvous*

P.O. Box 712, STN B

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Or email us at: [comments@MSP-Rendezvous.ca](mailto:comments@MSP-Rendezvous.ca)

Responses to letters-to-the-editor will be posted

on [www.MSProgram.ca](http://www.MSProgram.ca) or you can request

a hardcopy at 1-888-677-3243.

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## Ask the Expert

# Got a Goal?

## Here's How to Make it Work

At this time of year, many of us begin to realize that the goals or New Year resolutions we created a month ago are a quickly-fading memory. Why are goals so hard to achieve? Here, Dr. Richard Koestner, professor of psychology at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, tells us how to set a goal, and how to give yourself the best chance of sticking with it.

### Q *What makes a goal achievable or not achievable?*

Goals should be **SMART**: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-framed. The first two of these seem to be the most important in most cases. Unfortunately, people often set vague or conflicting goals and then fail to keep track of how well they stick to the goal. One of my research subjects set two goals for herself: to drink eight glasses of water a day, and to exercise three to four times per week. The good things about these goals are that they are specific and measurable, and also they go together nicely. But at the end of the study, she rated her success in achieving her goals as only 10 percent for drinking water, and 40 percent for

exercising. Why the limited success? – Probably because she needed an action plan, outlining when, where, and how she would perform her goals.

*"If your goal ties into your personal interests and values, it will be easier to pursue without calling forth a superhuman level of will power"*

### Q *What insights can you offer about goals or resolutions?*

The biggest insight I can offer is that failure is normal with most personal goals. People typically need six or seven attempts before they succeed at a New Year resolution – and New Year resolutions represent the most important goals a person has. So it is important to not be too hard on yourself if you fail at a goal. People who fail at their resolutions feel a little bad, but often they learn something from the attempt, something that can help them in their next try.



### Q *How long does it take for a new behaviour to become a habit?*

Research suggests that if you can make it past your first month, your chances of success greatly increase. The problem is that obstacles will inevitably arise (we get very busy at work or we catch the flu). The real test is whether we can resume the new goal after overcoming the obstacle.

### Q *Do you have any special tips for achieving goals?*

First, select goals that really suit you – ones that are interesting and meaningful. With goals you *have* to pursue, the trick is to find an interesting and personally meaningful way of pursuing the goal. If you have to exercise, find a method that really fits you and that you can get excited about. If your goal ties into your personal interests and values, it will be easier to pursue without calling forth a superhuman level of will power.

Second, spend some time making an action plan. How do you think you can accomplish the goal? When, where, and with whom will you do it? Is there any way to make sure you will remember it and stick with it? Do you have a plan for what to do when obstacles and distractions arise? The more of this planning you do, the more likely you are to have success. ■

## In the News

### Cyclist Rides Across Canada for MS

A 26-year-old man from Amherst Island, Ontario, who has a loved one with MS, has completed a solo bike ride across Canada to raise money for MS. Will Adam began his trip by dipping his bike tire into the Atlantic Ocean in Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, on May 1, 2007, and ended it 6,996 kilometres later, on September 28, 2007, dipping his bike in the Pacific Ocean in Victoria, British Columbia. The ride has raised more than \$46,000 and donations are still being collected. To learn more or make a donation to the MS Society, visit Adam's website at: [www.willslide.ca](http://www.willslide.ca) ■



Will Adam and his bike, from the road

Photo by Don Keith

### Choosing Fitness

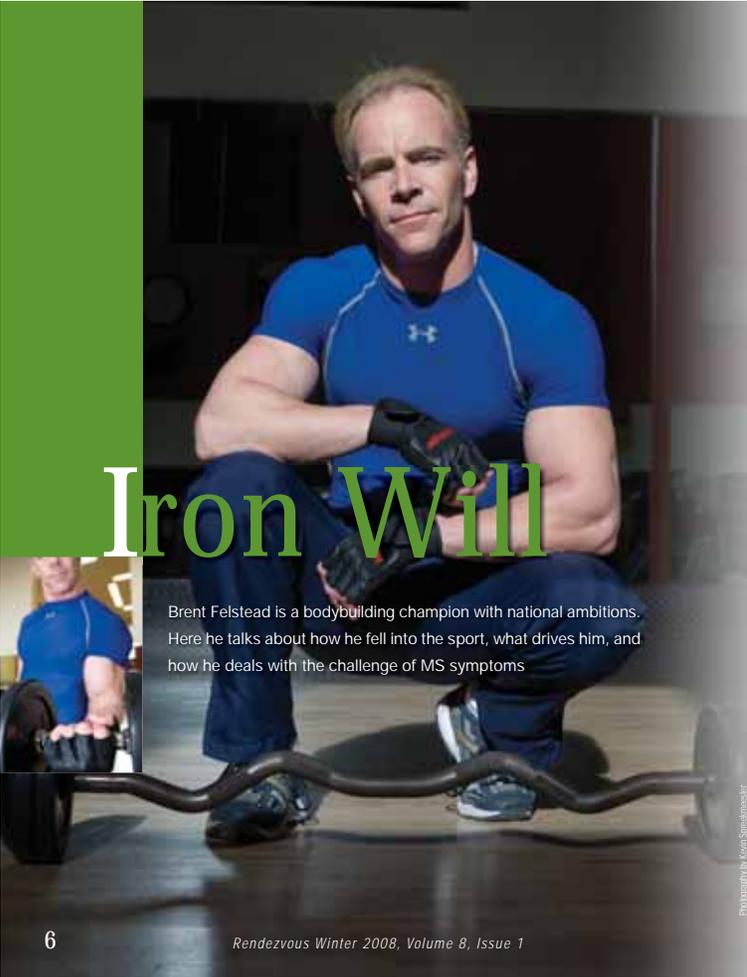
Toronto Rehab's MS Service provides an exercise DVD called *It's Your Choice*. Designed and produced by physiotherapists at Toronto Rehab, the DVD provides a flexible 15- to 45-minute home workout at 3 different difficulty levels. Available for \$23.99 (taxes, shipping and handling included). To order: call 416-597-3422 x 3441 or email [hong.miranda@torontorehab.on.ca](mailto:hong.miranda@torontorehab.on.ca) ■



*It's Your Choice* was made possible by an unrestricted educational grant from EMD Serono Canada, Inc.

Photo provided by Dr. Richard Koestner

Dr. Richard Koestner has been teaching in the Psychology Department at McGill University for over twenty years. His research focuses on self-regulation and goal-setting



# Iron Will

Brent Felstead is a bodybuilding champion with national ambitions. Here he talks about how he fell into the sport, what drives him, and how he deals with the challenge of MS symptoms

Brent Felstead has been working out at the gym for an hour and a half. Since he arrived, he's watched other fitness club members work on their routines and leave. But Felstead is still at it, doing just one more set on the dumbbells, working the pectoral machine for just a few more minutes. "It's quite intensive," he admits. "I train pretty much year-round."

That much is evident from his well-defined musculature. Felstead, who lives in Ottawa, Ontario, devotes hours of his week to building his strength, developing his muscles, and prepping his routines. He is the current reigning provincial bodybuilding champion in his class, and he's not about to let it slide now.

Felstead, 41, has been passionate about bodybuilding since he was a ten-year-old boy, admiring the muscle-bound superheroes in his comic books. He pestered his parents for his own set of weights. "The funny thing was," he says now, "the clerk talked my mother into getting a smaller set because they figured it would never be used." How wrong they were. Even back then, Felstead pumped iron almost every day.

He got his first taste of competition at age 17 in a high school bodybuilding tournament, where he placed third in the open division. (Cheering him on was his excited girlfriend, Nina, whom he later married.) Starting in 1995, Felstead competed officially at local, provincial, and national levels, often taking away trophies. He's won second place no fewer

than nine times. Then, just last year, he took first-place in his age class (for participants over age 40) at the Ontario National Qualifier. "It was about time!" he laughs. "I was like the second-place king."

Felstead is so zealous about bodybuilding that he coaches friends and is a qualified judge. He's been known to recruit co-workers into the sport, even talking them into competing. "Brent is so dedicated to the competition and to the bodybuilding itself, it keeps my drive going," says friend and training partner Rick Poirier, who himself placed third in two divisions at competition a year ago. "Brent establishes pretty intense workouts. There's a lot of work involved. So without his determination, it would be a very different story for me."

**"I'm competing at a higher level now than I was before I was diagnosed with MS"**

Most people who see Brent Felstead at competitions would be surprised to discover that this consistent winner also has MS. Not that he hides it. But no one ever approaches him to ask why he walks with a limp. "They figure I've got a training injury. That's the first thing that occurs to them," he says.

### Putting Health First

A top priority for Felstead is keeping the competition clean. "I've never used a performance drug in my entire life," he notes. He almost exclusively competes in drug-tested events. Here, among other athletes who are committed to natural training, he enjoys a strong sense of camaraderie. "In a natural

**"They figure I've got a training injury," Felstead says of judges or competitors who see his limp. "That's the first thing that occurs to them"**



Photo contributed by Brent Felstead

Photography by Kerin Spinks-McMaster

## Focus On

competition, it's friendly backstage," he says. "There's less of this self-important thing going on. The focus is on health."

It's that focus on health that drives Felstead in other areas of his life. His day job is with the Department of National Defence, where he tests equipment for electromagnetic radiation, making sure it won't interfere with the performance of other equipment, or even initiate explosions. He credits exercise with helping his stress levels and concentration on the job.

Felstead also believes that bodybuilding has helped him manage his MS symptoms. He was diagnosed in 1999, after mistaking the early signs of the disease for a mere pinched nerve. Now, he credits his workouts for helping him cope. "Fitness is as big a part of dealing with your MS as medication or anything else you can possibly do," he says. "Because of the training, you recover from flare-ups faster. You're less likely to have depression. Your fatigue is usually lessened. The list goes on and on."

Physiotherapist Victoria Szwajcer agrees. Few of us are accomplished bodybuilders like Felstead. But just keeping fit can have huge benefits, Szwajcer points out. She works with scores of clients at the MS Clinic at University of British Columbia Hospital, helping them find ways of staying active. "With MS, sometimes there are symptoms like weakness and fatigue, and those kinds of things would make us not want to exercise," says Szwajcer. "But when we exercise, we can actually help alleviate some of those symptoms."

That's certainly been Felstead's firsthand experience. You might say it keeps him motivated. Four times, Felstead has lost the tone in his shoulder muscles after a relapse. He says, "I had to rebuild them completely from scratch each time."



Photography by Kevin Spensmace

*Felstead began competing at the provincial level four years before his MS diagnosis*

He adds that his workouts – and his wins – also help build his confidence. "It comes down to the feeling that I'm doing something," he says.

Szwajcer notes that a positive outlook like Felstead's can make all the difference in maintaining an exercise regime. "That's always a big part of how well people do," she says. "In relapsing-remitting MS, there are windows of opportunity, after a relapse, when people are getting better. It's important to take that window of opportunity and do some exercises and rehab around that time."

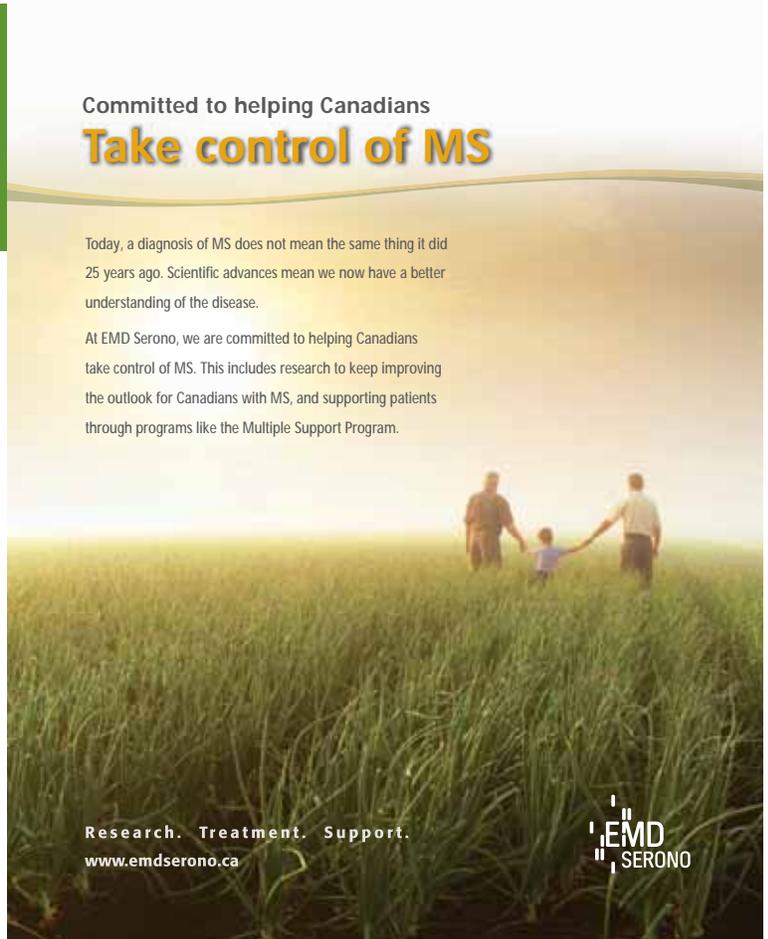
Felstead often travels on the job, which can challenge his training schedule. The military bases where he stays generally have good gym facilities. But Felstead has also been at sea for a stretch. "This is on a warship, not a pleasure cruiser," he points out. Nevertheless, the boats are well stocked with training equipment, if you aren't expecting a premium exercise suite. "Space is tight, so the equipment is spread throughout the ship – wherever there's a corner," Felstead says. And the most important lesson he's learned, working out at sea? "You make sure that you're always standing aft-to-bow, so that when the ship sways, if you've got a lot of weight, you don't get thrown right off balance."

**"When fighting MS, you've got to take on as many ways of battling as you can"**

## Committed to helping Canadians Take control of MS

Today, a diagnosis of MS does not mean the same thing it did 25 years ago. Scientific advances mean we now have a better understanding of the disease.

At EMD Serono, we are committed to helping Canadians take control of MS. This includes research to keep improving the outlook for Canadians with MS, and supporting patients through programs like the Multiple Support Program.



Research. Treatment. Support.  
[www.emdserono.ca](http://www.emdserono.ca)



## Focus On

### Balancing Act

Feeling inspired to work out? Physiotherapist Victoria Szwajcer recommends a balanced exercise program that includes these four components:

#### 1. Stretching

Focus on the muscle groups that have spasticity problems, or the muscles you'll be using in physical activity. Remember to breathe while stretching.

#### 2. Strengthening

You can pump iron, or even just use your own body weight, like in yoga, to work those muscles. Focusing on strengthening the muscles in your body core (your torso) can help with balance.

#### 3. Cardiovascular endurance

Try biking, walking, swimming, or anything else that gets your heart rate up. But don't overdo it. Shorter, more frequent sessions may be less tiring.

#### 4. Relaxation

Rest your body using meditation, breathing techniques, or a relaxation CD. Eastern practices like tai chi and qigong also promote relaxation.

Even if your mobility is limited, you can enjoy an endless variety of modified sports. "There are always ways to adapt things," says Szwajcer. Yoga, horseback riding, sailing, kayaking and skiing, for example, can be adapted according to ability. Contact the Multiple Support Program at [www.MSProgram.ca](http://www.MSProgram.ca) for information, or surf the Internet for programs in your region. ■



### Keeping Fitness in the Family

When he's not travelling, Felstead hangs out with Nina and sons Damien, 10, and Drake, 3. Although he isn't pushing the boys to follow in his footsteps, he concedes that they're a bit more familiar with bench presses and curls than the average kid. "Whenever I'm getting ready for a competition, they pretty much know my entire routine," he says.

He does, however, place importance on physical activity, taking his sons skiing in winter and biking in summer. In fact, the family went for years without cable television.

He also coaches Damien's soccer team, convinced that, through his example, his sons will value sport and exercise. "My father did that for me," he points out. "He was my soccer coach for years." In fact his dad, now 67, still coaches alongside Felstead, demonstrating for the pint-sized players anything that involves running (Felstead can no longer run more than a few steps). "My father even comes training with me once a week," Felstead says.

### Eating to Win

Keeping a body in top form takes more than physical activity. It also means eating a healthy, well-balanced diet. Rick Poirier notes that nutrition is an important component of bodybuilding. Before he got into the sport, he says he was "always going

*Continued on page 21*

## In the News

### Eye Scan Tracks MS

A new scanner can measure the progression of MS by scanning the nerve fibres in the retina of the eye. John Hopkins researchers publishing in the October 2007 issue of *Neurology* used the technique, called optical coherence tomography, to measure the thickness of the nerve fibres, which shrink as MS progresses. The scan takes only about five minutes and could help doctors recognize MS progression sooner in the course of the disease. The eye scan is faster and cheaper than magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which is currently used, but only detects changes due to MS once the disease has sufficiently progressed. ■



## Be a buddy

The Multiple Support Buddy Program means that no one needs to go through MS alone. We match people who have had MS for a while with those who have recently been diagnosed.

 Multiple Support Program

MS Program members are invited to get matched: call 1-888-677-3243

# Have Wheels, Will Travel



Pippa Blake with sons Ollie (left) and Jasper (right)

Photo contributed by Pippa Blake

Needing a wheelchair to get around didn't prevent Pippa Blake, of Victoria, British Columbia, from fulfilling her long-held goal of trekking in the Himalayas with her two sons.

On October 26, 2007 the 57-year-old nature lover and former ski instructor, along with sons Jasper, 33, Ollie, 31, and eleven other fit companions began a one-month journey from Kathmandu, Nepal to Base Camp, Mount Everest. What helped her realize her dream was an innovative, Canadian-made device called the TrailRider, that helps disabled people navigate the wilderness. She found the extra inspiration to just go for it from her supportive and highly athletic sons – Jasper won Ironman Canada in 2006 and Ollie placed sixteenth in this year's Ironman – who worked tirelessly this past year to coordinate the many details of the expedition. Before leaving, Blake shared with us how she prepared for this monumental adventure, who motivates her to keep on exploring, and what's next on her horizon.

For more information about the TrailRider, visit the British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society at: [www.disabilityfoundation.org/bcmos/index.php](http://www.disabilityfoundation.org/bcmos/index.php)

## Q Why is it so important for you to make this trip?

My boys and I had always planned to go trekking in Nepal. Then I got MS and ended up in a wheelchair. The boys kept saying that we would still do it. I thought, it's a nice idea, but it's not going to happen. Then last November, Ollie contacted a Sherpa in Kathmandu, who said he could make it work. When Ollie first told me, I thought, you must be kidding! But then we discovered the TrailRider, and it seemed like it could work.

## Q You'll be the first person ever to go to Base Camp in the TrailRider. How well does it work?

It's an extraordinary device. It's lightweight and folds up well. We've already done seven mini-hikes in mountains nearby. On tougher patches where we had to negotiate rocks and different things, we needed five or six people to guide it and sometimes pick it up. We've got such a wonderful team, and overall, we thought it could work quite well.

## Q How have you prepared for the physical rigours of this expedition?

I wanted to be more fit because, even though I'll be seated, it will still be physically demanding – there will be lots of jolting and jostling and I'll have to constantly realign my body. I've been lifting weights and cycling on an exercise bike. The left side of my body has rather disintegrated, so I've had to improvise in some ways. I've also been singing in a choir, which is good for my lung strength, which I'll need when acclimatizing to the altitude changes.

*"You'll actually feel so much better if you just push yourself and see what you can do"*

## Q People are fascinated by what you're doing. What has all the attention been like?

We've had many naysayers, people saying: I can't believe what they're doing; they must be crazy. That's fine; we don't worry about what those people say. Really, we're not being foolish – we've done all our homework and thought of everything. Mainly, we've received incredible support from all sorts of people. People have been very generous.

## Q Do you hope your journey inspires others with MS?

It would be easy, when you get a disease like this, to shut the door and say that's it. But maybe there's more you can do, and you'll actually feel so much better if you just push yourself and see what you can do. I think it's a question of doing what you can to make the most out of your life while you've still got it. ■



Pippa Blake with friends and teammates, on a practice hike, Garibaldi Lake, British Columbia

Photo contributed by Pippa Blake

## Blake on

... **sources of inspiration:** Rick Hansen is truly wonderful. And Steven Lewis! He is so wonderful, and I love his humour.

... **what's next:** I'd like to hike the 800-kilometre El Camino de Santiago trail in Spain. It's a medieval pilgrimage I've always wanted to do, and I would love to go with a bunch of other people in wheelchairs.

... **staying positive:** I think exercise is key. The more down you feel, the worse people respond to you. When you exercise, you feel great and it all comes back to you.

# Myelin Repair

## Beyond the Laboratory

In MS, the body's immune system mistakenly breaks down the protective myelin that surrounds nerves. But a new study offers hope for myelin repair

Using a human antibody, researchers have discovered a way to repair nerve myelin in experimental mice. Researchers from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota and the Jefferson Hospital of Neuroscience, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, found that the human antibody, given to experimental mice in very low doses, could repair myelin. The findings were presented on October 9, 2007, at the annual meeting of the American Neurological Association in Washington, DC.

Although the antibody has not yet been tested in humans, the study authors say the results are promising. When researchers injected a low dose of the antibody, it went to the damaged areas of myelin, bound to the myelin, and began repairing the myelin surface. The effect levelled off after about five weeks.

"Repair of chronic spinal cord injury is seldom modeled, but is an important reality for the

treatment of humans," says Dr. Moses Rodriguez, a Mayo Clinic neurologist and the study's corresponding author. "Remyelination offers neuroprotection and may limit permanent disability." The study was partly funded by the MS Society of Canada.

**"Remyelination offers neuroprotection and may limit permanent disability"**

"Repairing or preventing further damage caused by MS would represent a significant step in how we manage the disease," says April Royal, Assistant Vice-President of Medical Information & Education, of the MS Society of Canada. "While it remains to be shown how this mouse model adapts to a human context, the results do open another window into immune system function."

The researchers now hope to progress to a small thirty-patient clinical trial at the Mayo Clinic to test the antibody's safety in humans in 2008. ■



Dr. Moses Rodriguez

Photo contributed by Dr. Moses Rodriguez

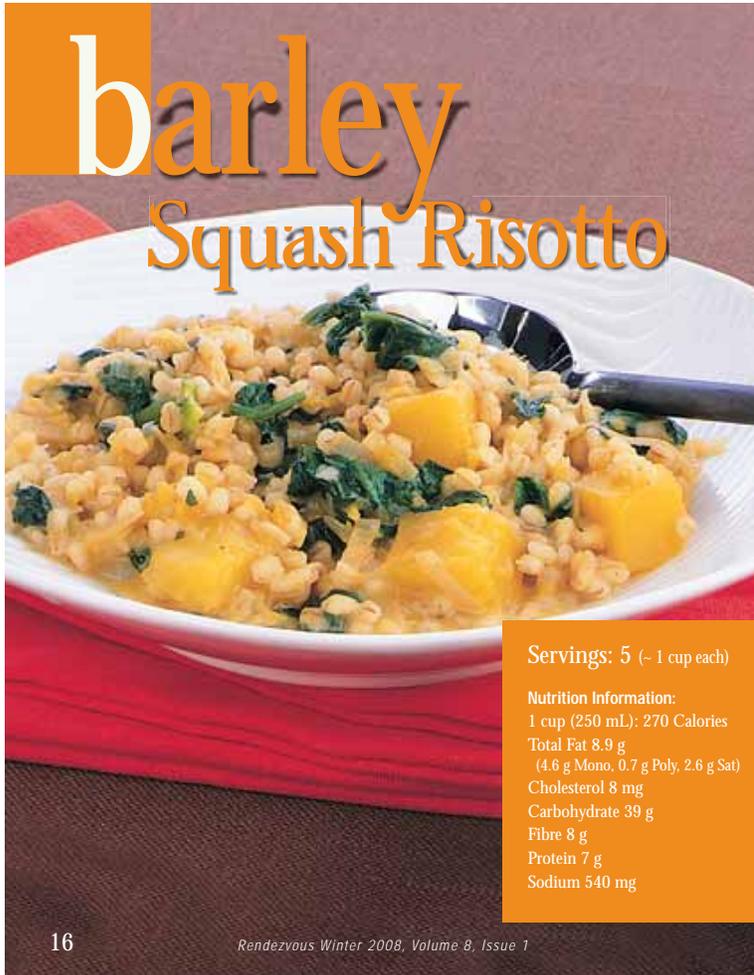


**67% of you said you haven't told your employer you have MS.**

Visit [www.MSProgram.ca](http://www.MSProgram.ca) to participate in this month's poll.



Multiple Support Program



Servings: 5 (~ 1 cup each)

**Nutrition Information:**  
 1 cup (250 mL): 270 Calories  
 Total Fat 8.9 g  
 (4.6 g Mono, 0.7 g Poly, 2.6 g Sat)  
 Cholesterol 8 mg  
 Carbohydrate 39 g  
 Fibre 8 g  
 Protein 7 g  
 Sodium 540 mg

## Recipe

**Risotto without the rice!** Barley gives this risotto a firmer texture that combines perfectly with fresh sage and butternut squash for a healthy and delicious whole grain dish.

### Barley Squash Risotto

5 cups	Prepared vegetable broth	1.25 L
2 tbsp.	Olive (or canola) oil	30 mL
1 tbsp.	Butter (or hard margarine)	15 mL
2 cups	Sliced leek (white part only)	500 mL
1	Garlic clove, minced (or 1/4 tsp., 1 mL, powder)	1
2 cups	Cubed butternut squash	500 mL
3/4 cup	Pot barley	175 mL
1/2 cup	Dry (or alcohol-free) white wine	125 mL
2 cups	Chopped fresh spinach leaves, lightly packed	500 mL
2 tbsp.	Grated Parmesan cheese	30 mL
1 tbsp.	Chopped fresh sage (or 3/4 tsp., 4 mL, dried)	15 mL

#### To prepare:

1. Measure broth into small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Cover to keep hot.
2. Heat olive oil and butter in large saucepan on medium. Add leek and garlic. Cook, uncovered, for about 5 minutes, stirring often, until leek is softened.
3. Add squash and barley. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until squash starts to soften.
4. Add wine. Cook and stir for about 1 minute until wine is almost absorbed. Add 1 cup (250 mL) hot broth, stirring constantly, until broth is absorbed. Repeat with remaining broth, 1/2 cup (125 mL) at a time, until broth is absorbed and barley is tender. Entire process will take about 50 minutes.
5. Add spinach. Heat and stir for about 1 minute until spinach is wilted.
6. Add cheese and sage. Stir. Serve immediately.

Recipe reprinted from *Whole Grain Recipes*  
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### Fight MS: Have a dinner party!

Did you know that every year on the last Saturday in February, people around the world host dinner parties in the fight against MS? This healthy and delicious barley squash risotto could make a great dish for your dinner party!



Visit [www.msglobaldinnerparty.ca](http://www.msglobaldinnerparty.ca), or call the MS Society of Canada at 1-866-922-6065, for more information on how you can get involved.



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## Fitness Challenge

# Hip Raises

Exercise improves strength, flexibility, coordination, and balance. Here's a new move to add to your routine:

*(You should not attempt this exercise if you are pregnant or have chronic back pain. Check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.)*



1 Lie on the floor with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor, about shoulder-width apart. Pull your belly button towards your spine as far as you can, to tighten the body core.



2 Keeping your stomach muscles tight, raise your butt off the floor while squeezing your butt muscles as hard as you can. Hold at the top for 3 seconds, then slowly lower your hips until your butt is just above the floor. Don't let your butt touch the floor until you've completed your set. Repeat for 3 sets of 15.

Photography by Kevin Sprookmaester

### Benefits:

Strengthens body core, lower back, buttocks, hamstrings ■

*This fitness challenge is contributed by Steve Brown, founder of HLI Personal Training. Visit his website at: [www.hlipro.com](http://www.hlipro.com)*

## Two Risk Genes for MS Found

Scientists have identified two genes that may raise the risk of MS. The findings, published in the August 30, 2007 issue of *New England Journal of Medicine* and the September 1, 2007 issue of *Nature Genetics*, are the result of international collaboration between many research teams conducting genome scans of more than 12,000 people. To find the suspect genes, the researchers gathered DNA samples from MS patients and their parents. They then looked for variations that were more commonly inherited in the people with MS than in people without MS.

Both of the genes identified, the IL-2 receptor and the IL-7 receptor, seem to play a role in autoimmune disease. Researchers say that having a genetic understanding of MS will help them develop future therapies. ■



## In the News

### Differing Results on Smoking's Effects

Two recent studies into how smoking affects the progress of MS have found differing results. A study from the Netherlands, published in the October 9, 2007 issue of *Neurology*, surveyed 364 people with MS, 263 of whom were smokers. The study found no difference in MS progression between the smokers and the non-smokers. Investigator Dr. Marcus W. Koch comments: "One might say that it does not matter for the prognosis of MS whether a patient smokes; it appears that smoking is neither 'good' nor 'bad' in established MS."

Yet, another study from the University of Buffalo used magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans of 368 people with MS, 128 of whom were smokers. The imaging results showed increased brain tissue shrinkage in the smokers with MS versus the non-smokers with MS. Results of the second study were presented October 13, 2007 at the 23rd Congress of the European Committee for the Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis, held in Prague, Czech Republic. Investigator Dr. Robert Zivadinov comments: "MS patients should be counselled to stop smoking, or at least to cut down so they can preserve as much brain function as possible." ■



## How secure is your medicine?

The Multiple Support Program offers a FREE Lock Box to members\*, to keep MS medicines safely away from little hands.

MS Program members are invited to call 1-888-677-3243 or visit [www.MSProgram.ca](http://www.MSProgram.ca) to request your free fridge lock box.

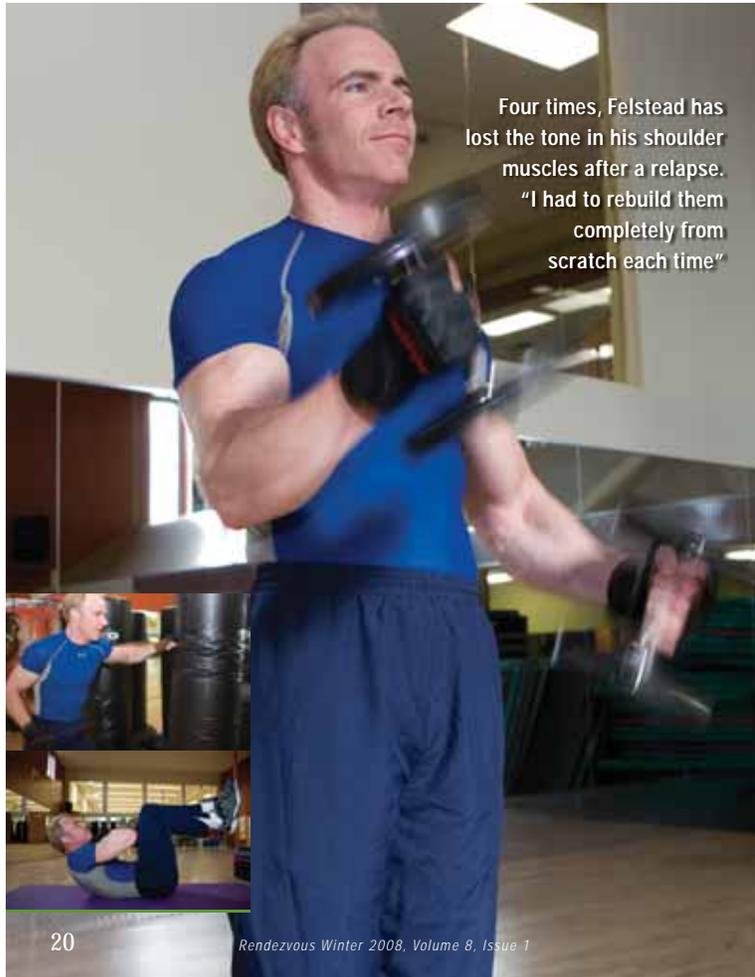


Multiple Support Program



FREE Fridge Lock Box for program members

\*Call to see if you are eligible to receive a free fridge lock box.



Four times, Felstead has lost the tone in his shoulder muscles after a relapse. "I had to rebuild them completely from scratch each time"

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out and having something with fries. But now it's all watching what you eat."

"I eat quite cleanly all year round," Felstead agrees. The bonus: it may be helping him manage his MS. Registered dietitian Dawna Royall of Fergus, Ontario, has studied research on nutrition and MS. "Maintaining a healthy weight will help you stay mobile," Royall says, adding that extra body weight can also aggravate MS symptoms.

### Exercising Caution

Felstead confesses that there are times when he has to psych himself up to working out. He frequently feels tired and has pain. But most of the time, he says, by the end of his training session he feels good. "Often I'm even exhilarated, with much less pain and better energy levels."

But moderation matters. "Knowing when to rest is really important," says Sz wajcer. "That's one of the keys with exercise and MS. Over-exercising can increase symptoms – it can look like a relapse, but it can be a temporary effect of pushing yourself too hard." She recommends a balanced approach to exercise.

## Focus On

### Looking Forward

And while his accomplishments are exceptional, Felstead is the first to agree that balance is a big deal for anyone with MS. "When fighting MS, you've got to take on as many different ways of battling as you can," he says. "You've got to be exercising, eating right, looking after yourself and taking a proper medication. All this goes into it."

And he continues to inspire his buddies. "I'm quite proud of my training partner," says Poirier. "I often brag about him. It's been mind-blowing to see his dedication to this sport."

So what's next for Felstead? Now that he's topped his bodybuilding class in Ontario, he'll be headed for the national competition in June, 2008. He dreams of taking on the world at an international event.

"Believe me, it's not always a rosy picture," Felstead says. "But let's just say, I'm competing at a higher level now than I was before I was diagnosed with MS. And I've maintained it the entire time." ■

## Eating Well

You don't have to be a bodybuilder to follow a healthy diet. Eating well is easier than you think, says registered dietitian Dawna Royall. Sometimes it just comes down to choices. Royall offers these quick nutrition tips:



- Trade in saturated (animal) fats for unsaturated fats like those found in vegetable oils and fish.
- Dairy products are a key source of vitamin D, but can be high in fat. Reach for low-fat options like skim milk.
- Opt for whole-wheat breads and pastas, and brown rice instead of white rice.
- If fresh fruits and vegetables are tricky to chew, frozen cooked veggies are almost as nutritious.
- To keep your weight down, limit juices and sweetened drinks. They pack a calorie punch without satisfying your appetite. ■

Over & Out

# My favourite way to get moving



“I like to be a **‘tourist’ in my hometown.** I’ll visit a local attraction to get out and about, and learn something new about where I live.”

“When I take my son to the park, I **play on the equipment too.** The stuff they have now is so much cooler than when I was a kid!”



“I use **online maps to find new routes** to walk. It keeps me from getting bored, I know how far I’m walking, and I always know how to get back.”



**TIP:** Google’s [www.gnap-pedometer.com](http://www.gnap-pedometer.com) is a great tool for mapping walking routes.

“Instead of going **grocery shopping** at the ‘megastore,’ I do it along my local **main street.** I support my local merchants, and get a workout at the same time.”



“**Shoe shopping** It’s win-win!”



Tell us about your **best friend.** Some stories may be published in a future issue of *Rendezvous*. Send your stories and photos to [comments@MSP-Rendezvous.ca](mailto:comments@MSP-Rendezvous.ca)

“How will I keep my medication cool on a 6-hour flight?”

“No one understands what I’m going through.”

“I’m scared to inject myself!”

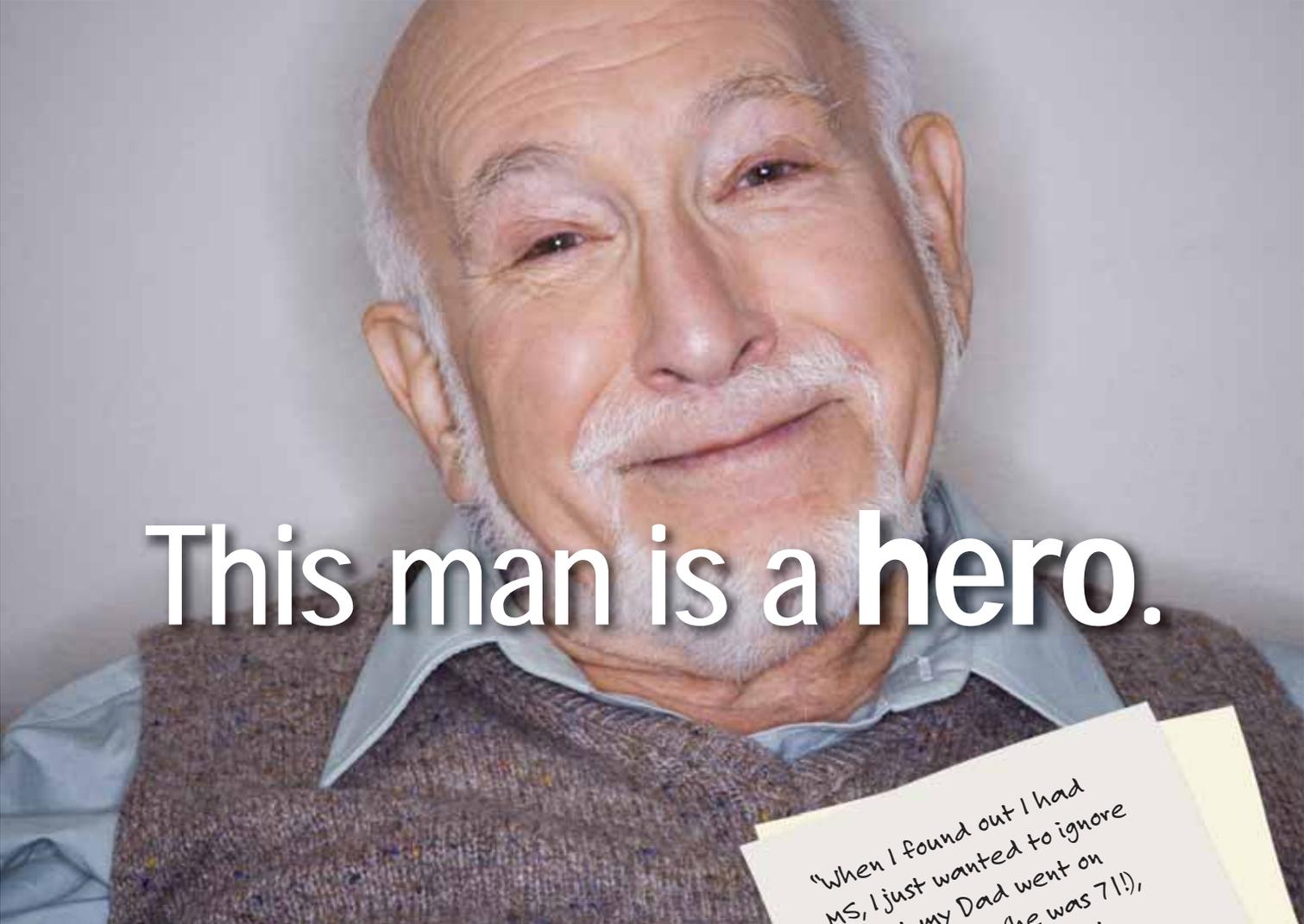
“I wonder how other people deal with this.”

“I don’t know what my insurance will cover!”

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"When I found out I had MS, I just wanted to ignore it. But my Dad went on the internet (he was 71!), and found out about treatment options. Without him, I would never have been brave enough to find out what I could actually do to take control."  
Marta, diagnosed in 2001



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