Multiple Sclerosis Disparities in US Minority Populations

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The cause of MS is unknown

but risk factors may include:

- Multiple Sclerosis (MS) – an immune-mediated disorder of the central nervous system – affects approximately:
  - 400,000 people in the US
  - 2.3 million worldwide

Minority racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. have a higher incidence of MS than people in their ancestral countries of origin, but data on their experiences are limited.

Prevalence of MS in minority populations

Differences in MS disease characteristics in minority populations

**African Americans**

With MS may:

- Have a higher Multiple Sclerosis Severity Score (MSSS) compared with Caucasians

**Hispanic Americans**

With MS may:

- Be older at disease onset and experience a more aggressive disease course, resulting in an increased risk for disability

Cultural and socioeconomic factors may impact MS management and quality of care

Minority patients may have difficulty accessing and utilizing specialty care because of barriers such as:

- Limited insurance, income, education, language, and computer literacy
- Lack of education on resources and treatment
- Poor communication with their physician or difficulty finding resources written in their primary language

Challenges to providing optimal treatment for minority populations

How to help address the needs of minority patients with MS

To better support people living with MS, Biogen is launching the MS Underserved Populations (MS-UP) initiative to help:

- Improve MS outcomes among racial and ethnic minority populations in the US
- Reduce clinical disparities via data generation
- Enhance external resources and partner with patient advocacy groups to better reach underserved communities
- Improve internal awareness of these disparities and offer education for Biogen employees to enhance the services offered for MS patients

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**References**

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Genetic predisposition, environment, gender, and religious beliefs and societal distrust may also be barriers to participation in clinical trials.