

West Wing Program features MS

Cult American TV show The West Wing, which enjoys a huge following of dedicated Aussie fans, is helping to shed light upon the incurable disease multiple sclerosis. As the prime time show enters the fifth series on Australian screens the shows pinnacle character President Bartlet, magnificently played by acting legend Martin Sheen, collapses after experiencing a multiple sclerosis exacerbation. During the shows unfolding story line, it soon becomes public knowledge that President Bartlet, the most powerful man on the hit-series, has been living with MS whilst successfully undertaking his presidency duties.

The West Wing is creating huge awareness of multiple sclerosis world-wide and not only raising awareness of a disease that is so often shrouded in secrecy but also educating people to the disease's many symptoms. The show successfully demonstrates a human element, that a diagnosis of MS does not have to stand in the way of a fulfilling life or successful career.

MS research is also discussed in one episode – but the need to find a solution to this disease is a strong underlying theme.

“President Bartlet’s character accurately portrays how a person living with multiple sclerosis can lead a hugely successful and active live. Often the disease is kept hidden from work colleagues as initially portrayed in the series. It’s great to see that the producers and writers of West Wing have created a powerful lead character now openly living with multiple sclerosis,” says Jeremy Wright, Executive Director, Multiple Sclerosis Research Australia.

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