

FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING

COURSE OVERVIEW



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Foundations of MS Nursing

Overview

The Foundations of MS Nursing Course is an introductory program designed for new multiple sclerosis (MS) nurses, nurses working in related areas (outpatients, neurology, infusion clinics) and other related healthcare professionals. The course builds foundational knowledge and skills in MS nursing and covers MS fundamentals, diagnosis, symptom management, therapies, lifestyle factors, brain health, and the role of MS nurses.

The course is designed and delivered by experience MS Nurses and MS Nurse Practitioners, drawing on their years of experience in MS Nursing. This is a self-paced course delivered in a relaxed and informative style.

The International Organization of Multiple Sclerosis Nurses ([IOMSN](#)) were instrumental in the development of the Foundations of MS Nursing course through the awarding of a 2025 International Nightingale Award to Dr Therese Burke to write the course. The funding also allowed the further development of the curriculum and provided scholarships for attendance at the live version presented at the 2025 MS Nurses Australasia ([MSNA](#)) annual conference in Auckland, New Zealand and the development of the online version of the course. We are grateful for their support, mentorship and guidance.

Objectives

The objectives of this course are:

1. Explore the fundamentals of MS nursing including
 - Overview of MS
 - MS diagnosis and phenotypes
 - Symptoms of MS and relapse/progression assessment
 - Disease modifying therapies (DMTs), AHSCT
 - Shared decision making in MS
 - Modifiable lifestyle factors and MS Brain Health
 - Key areas of impact for the MS Nurse
2. Identify resources for practice, including tips about explaining complex concepts to patients and families. Ideally suited to MS Nurses in the first year or two of the specialty
3. Foster mentorship and collegiality amongst new MS Nurses
4. Introduce infusion nurses to MS nursing and broader MS care and management
5. Introduce nurses from related areas (outpatients, neurology, infusion clinics) to MS nursing as a profession
6. Learn more about the history and the role of the MS Nurse
7. Networks and connections with other MS Nurses
8. To do all of this in an interactive, informal and nurturing environment

Undertaking the course

The Foundations of MS Nursing has five sessions, and each includes:

- a video with an introduction from Dr Therese Burke followed by a discussion between two experienced MS nurses
- a resource guide with overview notes, presenter bios, definitions, pictures/diagrams and links to other useful resources and information

The sessions are also accompanied by a glossary which provides definitions for the terms used throughout the course.

You can watch the videos at your own pace and return to them when you need a review of the topic.

Course overview

The full course is **3 hrs 46 mins** with five parts:

TOPIC	PRESENTERS
<p>Part 1: Wrapping your head around what MS means (41 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of MS and the prevalence of MS• Stages of MS including prodromal MS and MS phenotypes• Risk factors - environmental and genetic• The topographical model of MS• Diagnosing MS including MS tests• MS mimics• The challenges of an MS diagnosis• Gender specific considerations: Women and MS/Men and MS	<p>Susan Agland</p> <p>Fiona d'Young</p>
<p>Part 2: The nuts & bolts of MS (48 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Symptom assessment• Types of MS symptoms• MS relapses• Symptom management• The multidisciplinary team• MS comorbidities	<p>Sharon Barlow</p> <p>Imogen Milner</p>
<p>Part 3: The rescue mission (56 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disease modifying drugs (DMDs)/ disease modifying treatments (DMTs)• Autologous haematopoietic stem cell transplant (AHSCT)• Complementary therapies• Shared decision making	<p>Tim O'Maley</p> <p>Karina Dodd</p>

<p>Part 4: Embedding empowerment (39 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifiable Lifestyle Factors • Empowerment for people living with MS • MS Brain Health 	<p>Dr Therese Burke</p> <p>Belinda Bardsley</p>
<p>Part 5: The role and impact of MS Nurses (42 mins)</p>	<p>Belinda Bardsley</p> <p>Dr Therese Burke</p>

Course completion

When you have finished the course, you will be asked to complete a **Feedback Form**. When this has been completed you will be issued with a **Certificate of Completion**.

You may claim four hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) following completion of this course, refer to this guide for more information.

[View the guide](#)

Additional resources

There are a range of resource mentioned throughout the course. These are listed below along with other resources that are useful for MS nurses.

2023 MS Nursing toolkit

The International Organization of Multiple Sclerosis Nurses (IOMSN) have developed a MS Nursing Toolkit. The toolkit was developed by MS nursing experts. There are seven comprehensive slide decks covering topics including the nature of MS, treatment, symptom management, invisible symptoms, rehabilitation, cultural diversity and pregnancy and breastfeeding.

[View the toolkit](#)

Living well with MS guides

Originally developed in 2020, MS Australia updated the *Living Well with MS* guides to incorporate new wellness content supporting people living with MS to make informed lifestyle decisions that promote better health and wellbeing and support day-to-day living with MS.

These resources include two guides – one for people living with MS and one for health professionals – informed by the latest research and real-life experience.

The guide for health professionals brings together the latest evidence on modifiable lifestyle factors in MS, offering practical insights and evidence-based interventions to support MS management, clinical conversations, and shared decision-making to improve health outcomes for people living with MS.

[View the guides](#)

Brain Health Time Matters

The *'Brain health – time matters'* Report covers the latest advancements and needs in MS, NMOSD and MOGAD and highlights the policy changes needed to help people with these diseases live their best possible lives.

Since the first publication in 2015, care and treatment in neuroimmune conditions have hugely advanced. This new report delves into these advancements and addresses the ongoing needs of those living with these lifelong conditions.

[View the report and accompanying infographics and videos](#)

Bladder & bowel wellness with MS

The *Your Guide to Bladder & Bowel Wellness with Multiple Sclerosis* was developed by a team of MS Nurses. It was designed to empower people to have the knowledge and practical skills to navigate some of the bladder and bowel challenges associated with MS.

It provides an overview of the underlying causes and explores various management options and proactive steps that people can take.

[View the guide](#)

MS MOOCS

The Menzies Institute of Medical Research at the University of Tasmania have developed a series of MS MOOC Modules. These are all self-paced on-line learning modules.

- Deciding about Disease Modifying Therapies (DMTs) for Multiple Sclerosis – 4-6 hours, always open
- Mental Health and Multiple Sclerosis – 4-6 hours, always open
- Ageing Well with Multiple Sclerosis – 4-6 hours, always open
- Understanding Multiple Sclerosis – 12 hours. Check the website for the next available date

Accessing MS Nurses via MS Australia member organisations

People living with MS in **Western Australia, South Australia** and the **Northern Territory** can access a MS nurse through MS WA. MSWA Neurological Nurses provide tailored information about neurological conditions including MS, Parkinson's, Huntington's, motor neurone disease, acquired brain injury and more. They also provide training, education, and support for all disease modifying therapies and can also facilitate and coordinate your clinical care.

[Find out more about MS WA Neurological Nurses](#)

People living with MS in **NSW, Victoria, ACT, Tasmania** and **Queensland** can access a MS nurse through MS Plus. MS Plus MS Nurses can assist with management of MS including navigating a new diagnosis, treatment, a relapse or any other health concerns.

[Find out more about MS Plus Nurses](#)

Background

MS Nurses

MS Nurses are an integral part of the multidisciplinary healthcare team of specialist healthcare professionals providing support, education, advice, and care for people with MS and their family and carers including:

- Information, education and advice at the point of diagnosis and ongoing
- Case management and clinical care
- Symptom assessment and management
- Relapse management
- Monitoring, safety and risk management of disease modifying therapies (DMTs) and medications
- The provision of psychosocial support
- Assisting with accessing relevant support services
- Empowering people through informed and shared decision-making about treatment, lifestyle, and research choices

Access to MS Nurse care brings health benefits for people with MS. These include lower disability level, slower self-reported disease progression, less severe symptoms, lower levels of depression and anxiety, and a higher quality of life.

MS Nurses are also a highly cost-effective model of care. MS Nurse care reduces the need for other, more costly health professionals, such as GPs and neurologists and prevents unnecessary emergency department presentations and potentially, unplanned hospital admissions.

MS Nurse Practitioners

MS Nurse Practitioners (NP) can provide additional care including assess, plan and treat, prescribe (some) symptomatic therapies, order pathology and some radiology.

[Watch the MS Nurses: Life-Changing Care video](#)

MS Nurses Advocacy

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Nurses are an integral part of the multidisciplinary healthcare team of specialist healthcare professionals providing support, education, advice, and care for people with MS and their family and carers.

MS Australia is committed to expanding access to MS nurses for people living with MS and assisting the MS Nurses workforce, including:

- Releasing the **MS Nurse Care in Australia Report**, developed in collaboration with the Menzies Institute for Medical Research and MS Nurses Australasia (MSNA). The report explores the patterns of access to MS Nurses in Australia and the impact on health outcomes for people living with MS.
- Establishing the **MS Nurses Working Group** to action the Report recommendations and identify solutions.
- **Advocating** on MS Nurse issues and promoting the work of MS nurses.

[Read more about MS Australia's MS Nurse advocacy](#)

MS Nurses Report

The MS Nurse Care in Australia Report by MS Australia, in collaboration with the Menzies Institute for Medical Research and MS Nurses Australasia (MSNA) explores the patterns of access to MS Nurses in Australia and the impact on health outcomes for people living with MS.

The report found that the number of MS nurses is declining and one-third of Australians living with MS (equivalent to 8,000 people) do not have access to life-changing MS nurse care and have consistently worse health outcomes. Access is even worse for those living in outer regional, remote, or very remote areas, with almost half having no access to MS Nurse care (48.8%).

MS Nurses are a highly cost-effective model of care. MS Nurse care reduces the need for other, more costly health professionals, such as GPs and neurologists and prevents unnecessary emergency department presentations and potentially, unplanned hospital admissions. It is a highly cost-effective model of care.

If every Australian with MS had access to MS Nurse care as part of their ongoing MS management plan this would result in substantial cost savings for MS healthcare in Australia. It would significantly delay disease progression and contribute to an increased quality of life. There are further savings from a reduced reliance on disability, aged care and community supports.

The report made the following recommendations:



Raise awareness of the existence of MS Nurses, their value, and the supports and services they provide to people with MS and health practitioners



Assist the existing MS Nurse workforce through mentorship and preceptorship, connecting and educating existing MS Nurses and exploring opportunities within university nursing courses to include education about MS Nursing and MS Research Nursing



Increase the number of MS Nurses in Australia by targeted advocacy and assessing the current funding arrangements



Increase access to MS Nurses through expanding telehealth services and advocacy to the Australian Government

MS Nurses Working Group

In September 2022, MS Australia established a MS Nurses working group to action the MS Nurse Care in Australia Report recommendations and identify solutions to enable all Australians living with MS to be aware of and have access to MS Nurse care as a part of their ongoing MS management.

You will see Working Group members Belinda, Therese, Tim and Sharon as presenters through the course.

[Read the full MS Nurse Care in Australia Report](#)

MS Australia

MS Australia is Australia's national multiple sclerosis (MS) not-for-profit organisation that empowers researchers to identify ways to treat, prevent and cure MS, seeks sustained and systemic policy change via advocacy, and acts as the national champion for Australia's community of people affected by MS.

MS Australia represents and collaborates with its state and territory MS Member Organisations, people with MS, their carers, families and friends and various national and international bodies to:

- Fund, coordinate, educate and advocate for MS research as part of the worldwide effort to solve MS
- Provide the latest evidence-based information and resources
- Help meet the needs of people affected by MS

[Find out more about the work of MS Australia](#)

MS Nurses Australasia

MS Nurses Australasia Inc (MSNA) is the peak body for MS Nurses in the Southern Hemisphere, providing education and support for MS nurses and other health care professionals in Australia and New Zealand.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) nurses are a subspecialty in neuroscience nursing and have become a dynamic group who have worked hard to ensure that high quality, evidence-based nursing care is promoted and delivered for all people diagnosed with MS.

MSNA strives to improve and support the MS nursing cohort through:

- Supporting strong formal and informal networking, peer support and mentorship opportunities for MS nurses
- Presenting an annual conference to showcase Australasian MS nurse research and practice developments
- Providing financial scholarship opportunities for MSNA members to support and encourage further development of the MS nurse skill set, nurse led research, support career development and to advance MS nursing practice in Australasia
- Keeping MS nurses updated on contemporary issues impacting people with MS to enhance their capacity to advocate for and support people with MS and work effectively within that person's health care team.

[Find out more about the work of MSNA and how to become a member](#)



IOMSN has reviewed this project that was developed by Therese Burke as a resource for MS Nurses. IOMSN has concluded that this project is fair balanced and accurate and is valid for educational purposes.