Exposure to parental smoking (ParS) is associated with an increased risk for multiple sclerosis (MS) in later life in certain populations, according to a study presented at EAN 2024, the 10th Congress of the European
Caterina Ferri, M.D., from the S. Anna University Hospital in Ferrara, Italy, and colleagues examined the impact of past exposure to ParS, including maternal smoking during pregnancy (MSDP), on MS risk among adults. The association between MS and smoking habit, MSDP, and maternal/paternal smoking (MaS/PaS) was examined using data for 1,565 Canadian, 2,040 Italian, and 2,674 Norwegian individuals.

The researchers found that among Norwegians, there was an association between MS and MSDP and MaS (odds ratios [95% confidence intervals], 1.38 [1.12 to 1.71] and 1.39 [1.17 to 1.65], respectively). Among Canadians, there was a trend toward an increased risk for MS in association with PaS (adjusted odds ratio, 1.21; 95% confidence interval, 0.97 to 1.51). In the Italian population, no significant association was seen with any ParS.

"It is hard to investigate this field," Ferri said in a statement. "Another factor to be considered is that if your parents smoke, you are more predisposed to becoming a smoker, which affects per se the risk of developing MS. So, there is a lot of confounding in this kind of study if you do not adjust the results. You may find results that do not reflect the reality."
