

# Many MS patients struggle with finances, forgo treatments

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(HealthDay)—More than three-quarters of Americans with multiple sclerosis (MS) experience financial difficulties that often prevent them from getting treatment, new research claims.

"Our study results demonstrate the high prevalence of financial toxicity for MS patients and the resulting decisions patients make that impact their [health care](#) and lifestyle," said study author Dr. Gelareh Sadigh, an assistant radiology professor at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta.

She and her colleagues surveyed 243 adult MS patients visiting neurology clinics and found that 56% reported declines in income after their MS diagnosis, and 37% had a decrease greater than 20%.

More than one-third (35%) of the patients reported not sticking to their medication or medical imaging routines due to the cost. Thirteen percent said they didn't get recommended imaging tests, which have

higher copayments than other [health care services](#), according to the study.

The study, sponsored by the Harvey L. Neiman Health Policy Institute in Reston, Va., is the first to evaluate "financial toxicity" in MS patients and whether [financial hardship](#) is associated with forgoing medication and imaging follow-up prescribed in their treatment plan, the authors said.

MS patients can face considerable financial struggles due to expensive treatments, high rates of disability and lost income.

"Over the last 20 years, higher out-of-pocket costs for advanced imaging tests and increased cost sharing have caused the financial burdens on MS patients to escalate. Among medically bankrupt families, MS is associated with the highest total out-of-pocket expenditures, exceeding those of [cancer patients](#)," Sadigh said in an institute news release.

The findings were published recently in the *Multiple Sclerosis Journal*.

"These data underscore the need for shared decision-making and an awareness of patient financial strain when planning treatment strategies," said study co-author and Neiman Institute affiliate senior research fellow Dr. Richard Duszak.

"In addition to the impact on adherence, financial toxicity was associated with significantly lower physical health-related quality of life, demonstrating the broad consequences of treatment costs for many MS patients," added Duszak, vice chair for health policy and practice in the Department of Radiology and Imaging Sciences at Emory.

**More information:** The American Academy of Family Physicians has more on [multiple sclerosis](#).

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