

Multiple about to fall
over; she also has



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BUSTER**

Multiple Sclerosis, MS for short, effects approximately 5 in 10, 000 people, and my step-mom Kathy happens to be one of the unlucky few (Rogner 5).

MS is a disease that strikes the central nervous system, which consists of the brain and spinal chord. These two organs control the movement and function of the entire body.

Inside the body of a person with MS the tube that sends signals throughout the body is either partially or fully blocked, leaving the victim with for starters, impaired vision, strength, and coordination (5). There are a couple of different types of MS, which include relapsing-remitting, primary-progressive, secondary-progressive, and primary relapsing (Kalb 5). The type that my step mom has is primary-progressive, which is considered the worst type of MS. According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society a person with primary-progressive MS is “ characterized by a gradual but steady progression of disability from the onset, with no obvious plateaus or remissions, or only occasional plateaus and minor, temporary improvements.” In short this means that the symptoms Kathy is experiencing such as falling down due to a lack of coordination, tiredness, numbness, and bladder problems are only going to get worse. But possibly the worst symptom of all are mental problems such as a loss of self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness. The most obvious effect that MS has on a person is a loss of coordination and balance; approximately 77 percent of people afflicted with MS experience this symptom (3).

When my family went to the Grand Canyon for a vacation we had no idea that Kathy was afflicted with multiple sclerosis. We took a mule ride down to the bottom of the canyon, and when we reached our destination there was a

ranch where we stayed the night. As you might expect it was very warm at the bottom of the canyon in the middle of the summer, over 100 degrees to be exact, so our family decided to go swimming in the river. On the walk down to the water, there was a metal grate that held rocks in place on the embankment, and as Kathy and my Dad walked down this grate Kathy slipped and tore up her foot on the metal. This was just a minor incident, but it was one of the first signs that Kathy could be having a problem. Now, about two years later Kathy walks with a cane, especially when she is in crowds of people, so she can eliminate having to hold on to strangers when she is about to fall over; she also has a constant feeling of weaknesses, described only by her as “ my melting muscles” (Doyle). Sometimes on bike rides because her balance is so bad the wind will actually tip her over, and a task as simple as taking our dog for a walk has now become a chore.

After a fifteen minute walk, which for the most part includes at least five falls, or close calls, Kathy has to lay down for at least a half hour just to get her strength back. To help keep the symptoms of MS down to a minimum Kathy has been prescribed a drug called abonex. In order to administer abonex, Kathy has to give herself a shot once a week. The side effects of this shot are severe flue like symptoms for at least twelve hours after the shot has been taken. So once a week Kathy spends almost the entire day in bed, which not only makes her feel bad physically, but also emotionally. Kathy is the type of person who likes to get out and do things.

Before she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis she would run five miles a day, just to get exercise, and when her legs didn't feel like running the entire five miles, before she would go to work she could be found on our Nordic

Track getting her exercise for the day. Kathy has now gone from working sixty hours a week to forty, not including the almost weekly event of calling in and telling her boss that she is just too tired to come into work (Doyle). At one point Kathy was the top accountant at Hackley Hospital, now because she can't work as much, or as efficiently, she has become "just another accountant" (Doyle). This fact alone has really hurt her self esteem, just imagine being at the top of a company, and because of something you have no control over to be demoted back to where you started how ever many years ago.

As I have illustrated, multiple sclerosis can be very damaging to a person both physically and mentally. Unfortunately, there is no real cure for MS yet, but doctors all over the world are trying new and improved ways to treat, and for now at least, slow down the effects of MS. Hopefully, soon a cure will be found, and thousands of other individuals, and families will not have to go through what mine is.