

WCHQ Health Insights

Multiple Sclerosis in Wisconsin | March 2026

Multiple sclerosis (MS) impacts over **20,000 Wisconsinites** and costs over **\$1.7 billion** annually in healthcare expenses.



★ WHY THIS MATTERS

30% of Wisconsinites live in MS care deserts, making specialist care difficult to access, delaying diagnosis and treatment, and increasing costs of care.

RETURN ON IMPROVEMENT

Improved management of MS results in lower healthcare costs, fewer days of missed work, less early retirement, and **better quality of life.**

IMPACT ON WISCONSIN

- MS has a wide spectrum of symptoms and severity and is complex to diagnosis and treat, requiring access to specialist care.
- Delays in diagnosis and access to treatment result in more severe symptoms and disease progression.

WHAT LAWMAKERS SHOULD KNOW

Positive Movement

Early diagnosis and treatment has improved prognosis and extended time from diagnosis to disability.

Concerning Trend

Access to MS specialists remains a barrier for many patients with MS due to wait times and distance.

Policy Implication

Targeted investment in prevention and early detection offers both improved health outcomes and meaningful cost containment.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR PATIENTS WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



Statewide Improvement Goal: Identify MS specialist deserts (geographic areas without access to MS providers) and improve patient access.

Understand Trends in MS Diagnosis

Deliver Provider Education to Primary Care

Focus on Women

Target Underserved and Rural Communities

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT RESULTS

Improving Outcomes for Patients with Multiple Sclerosis

To improve outcomes for patients with MS, WI health systems are:

- Rotating specialists through **rural clinics**
- Improving **medication management** in primary care
- Streamlining **neurology referrals** for appropriate patients

By improving MS knowledge for primary care providers, WI health systems can reduce the time between symptom onset and diagnosis and begin treatment earlier in disease progression. This will result in better disease management and slower disease progression.

ABOUT WCHQ

We are Wisconsin's leading electronic health record data hub, connecting over 80% of primary care providers statewide. With 15+ years of clinical data, we offer cost-effective, research-ready resources to researchers and industry partners. Our infrastructure drives data innovation, health equity, and better outcomes, supporting \$30M+ in grant-funded research and aiding patient care improvements across Wisconsin.