

# GENERATIONS

## *Building the MS Workforce of the Future*

Welcome to the second issue of *Generations*, a publication dedicated to the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Workforce of the Future. I am thrilled to share that on October 25th, 2021, I participated in a successful, in-person, full-day mentorship forum during the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) Annual Meeting in Orlando, FL. The invitation-only event was attended by 40 participants from 30-plus institutions and three countries, and was designed to train and guide emerging neurology scholars for successful and productive careers in MS.



During the forum, we discussed current and future research needs in MS, adaptations for networking during the COVID-19 pandemic, CV development, negotiation skills, and various pathways for careers in MS. A team of 11 faculty members, peer mentors, and guest speakers led the discussions. Of the 11 leaders, 10 were women, highlighting the contribution of women-clinicians, scientists, and educators to the future of MS care. In keeping with that, this issue of *Generations* is devoted to women in MS care, highlighting pearls from an interactive symposium held during the 2021 CMSC Annual Meeting.

I invite you to enjoy and learn more about career skills in this issue of *Generations*, and I wish you all a healthy and prosperous new year!



**For more information about MS and the Workforce of the Future, visit:**

Consortium of MS Centers (CMSC): <https://www.mscares.org>  
Foundation of the CMSC: <https://cmscfoundation.org/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ahmed Z. Obeidat".

Ahmed Z. Obeidat, MD, PhD  
Editor

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## Women in Multiple Sclerosis: How to Build Your Career Skills

An interactive symposium held during the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) focused on how women who enter the multiple sclerosis (MS) field can build their skills so they can thrive in their careers. The session was chaired by Carrie M. Hersh, DO, MSc, FAAN, assistant professor of neurology at the Lerner College of Medicine and director of the MS Health and Wellness Program at the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Nevada. She noted that “An increasing number of highly motivated women are entering the MS field and looking for guidance on career advancement, so established clinicians like myself want to share our knowledge and experience.”



### Self-Promoting Your Accomplishments

The first presentation at the symposium was given by Mary Alissa Willis, MD, associate professor of neurology and chair of the Department of Neurology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Madison, who addressed the importance of self-promotion for women. Dr. Willis noted that 2016 data found a \$40,000 difference in academic neurology salaries for men versus women, which she posited is partially due to a lack of self-promotion by women. “Women are not working less or doing less—in fact, they tend to put in more hours than men—but they don’t draw attention to their accomplishments the way men do,” she said. “They are taught to be self-effacing. But my mentor, Dr. Lael Stone, told me it’s not enough to do great work—you also have to talk about the work you are doing and what your accomplishments are.”



Dr. Willis described self-promotion as a process and a goal-directed, learned skill, as well as a team sport. “As you raise yourself, you raise others with you,” she explained, adding that by self-promoting, you can not only

earn a higher salary, but you can also place yourself firmly on the path to promotion.

Dr. Willis suggested the following steps for self-promotion:

- Share your accomplishments.
- Take self-promotion beyond your workplace (eg, share publications and promotions on social media).
- Promote others.
- Take full advantage of your annual performance review to self-promote and state your value.
- Keep your CV up to date.
- Share your goals with others.

Dr. Willis concluded her presentation by advising against bragging and underdelivering in favor of overdelivering. “If you are already doing high-visibility work, focus on the work and let the results speak for themselves,” she said. “On the other hand, if you are doing low-visibility work, be sure to let others know about your accomplishments.”

### Crafting a 5-Minute Elevator Pitch

Mary Rensel, MD, FAAN, assistant professor of neurology at the Lerner College of Medicine and director of Wellness and Pediatric MS at the Mellen Center at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, gave the next presentation—via a streaming platform—on how to create a succinct and persuasive “sales” pitch about yourself. This so-called elevator pitch is an essential tool, especially if you should ever find yourself in the elevator with a decision-maker for your medical system, as well as when you are conducting a job search, looking to get promoted, seeking donations, pitching grants, talking to patients and administrators, and networking at meetings such as the CMSC. “The goal of the elevator pitch is to communicate what you have to offer and that you have a clear plan or idea that you are pursuing,” she explained, adding, “When delivering your elevator pitch, it is important to speak slowly and with passion, exude confidence, and show your expertise and competence.”

Dr. Rensel suggested utilizing a template developed by Harvard-MIT to craft an elevator pitch. This template dictates that you:

- State the problem.
- Present your solution.
- Explain why people should trust you (eg, state your credentials and experience).
- Describe your value proposition (what you are offering).
- Offer a call to action (eg, give the recipient of the pitch your business card or email address so that he or she can follow up with you).

### Negotiation Tactics

Dr. Rensel then segued into offering tactics for negotiating as described in the book *Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended on It* by



businessman Chris Voss. She reported that the following steps are essential to successful negotiations:

- Know your co-negotiator’s style so you can both win something in the negotiation. Voss identifies three general styles:
  1. **Accommodators:** These types hate conflict and need a few minutes to talk personally with you before beginning a negotiation.
  2. **Analysts:** These types want data and black-and-white paths forward, and want to negotiate quickly.
  3. **Assertives:** These types want to be heard and to dominate the interaction.
- Prepare and set your goals for the negotiation. This entails establishing rapport and showing empathy, mirroring your co-negotiator’s signals by repeating the last three words he or she said

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and pausing to give the person time to reflect on what you've said and slow the pace of the discussion. She also recommended keeping the emotional tone of the interaction positive and never angry. And finally, she said that if you get stuck or nervous during a negotiation, you proceed by asking "How" and not "Why?" (eg, ask "How can I make that happen?" rather than something like "Why did you ask me to this meeting?" which sounds accusatory).

- Be aware of the five levels of negotiations:
  1. Get ready and prepare.
  2. Set boundaries (eg, know your definite "no's").
  3. Be aware of the negotiator's nonverbal communication, which can offer clues to his or her level of receptivity.
  4. Punch back—but without anger.
  5. Be ready to respond to the unexpected inquiry, offer, or reaction.
- Confirm "yes" three times—once when you reach an agreement or get a commitment; a second time to confirm that you correctly understand the agreement/commitment; and then a third time to get a recommitment of that agreement/commitment.

**Success Stories**

Next, Amy M.B. Sullivan, PsyD, ABPP, director of Behavioral Medicine and Research at the Mellen Center



for MS, director of engagement and wellbeing at the Neurological Institute (NI), and assistant professor of medicine, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of

Medicine, provided some perspectives on successful self-promotion. "The Cleveland Clinic Wom-

*"Women in medicine are faced with intrinsic and unique challenges. Learning and adopting skills to advance in her profession is paramount for career growth, promotion, and ultimately greater workplace satisfaction."*

CARRIE M. HERSH,  
DO, MSc, FAAN

en's Leadership Cohort, which is led by myself and Dr. André Machado (neurosurgeon and chair of the NI), is a program that offers members the opportunity to explore their identity as a leader, gain exposure to key leadership activities, participate in formal leadership development programs, and receive insights and support from fellow leaders," she explained. Members join a cohort of up to 10 peers and engage in a variety of leadership development activities for a duration of 2 years,

an approach that allows members to build enduring relationships, reflect on shared experiences, and empower one another along their leadership journey.

"The program has had great success in many ways. First we have changed the diversity on the org chart in the NI," she reported. "We started with one female on the org chart in 2017, and today we have four. In addition, the engagement by our female (and male) staff has improved significantly over time."

One of the participants in the program, Taylor Rush, PhD, director of Behavioral Services and Interdisciplinary Programs, Center for Neurological Restoration at Cleveland Clinic, noted that "The NI Women's Leadership Program has been an instrumental tool in my success. It helped to tear off the ceiling I didn't initially know I was pushing against. I was able to access enterprise leadership development programming offered that I otherwise would never

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# FCMSC Scholar Recognition Luncheon 2021

In addition to attending an invitation-only educational symposium (see page 1), MS Mentorship Forum participants and faculty were invited to a special luncheon during the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) to network, recognize and discuss posters submitted by medical school scholars, listen to presentations, and enjoy a hot buffet luncheon. The CMSC meeting was

the only live multiple sclerosis (MS) meeting held in 2021, and successfully comingled live and streaming presentations and participants. All attendees were encouraged to be vaccinated, wear masks and observe social distancing measures indoors, and avoid shaking hands. They also had to answer health status questions and receive a wristband each day to enter the conference areas.



Fifteen FCMSC Medical Student Research Scholarships were awarded in 2021. These scholars were mentored by CMSC member researchers and clinicians, and invited to present their research results at the annual CMSC meeting and other scientific meetings related to the treatment of MS.



Ahmed Obeidat, MD, PhD, a 2021 FCMSC Mentorship Forum Faculty Member and Editor of *Generations*, gave an update on the MS Professionals in Training Special Interest Group (MS PiT SIG) during the luncheon.



CMSC and FCMSC President Scott Newsome, DO, MSCS, FAAN, of Johns Hopkins Multiple Sclerosis Center in Baltimore, welcomed scholars to the luncheon and meeting.



June Halper, MSN, APN-C, MSCN, FAAN, Chief Executive Officer of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC), closed out the luncheon and meeting.



Jennifer Graves, MD, PhD, MAS, of the University of California, San Diego, in La Jolla and a 2021 FCMSC Mentorship Forum Faculty Member, delivered an address on “MS Across the Lifespan and Across a Career.”

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have known existed. It also gave me an opportunity to sit at tables I would have never been invited to. This gave my hard work actual visibility and allowed me to take on new and challenging projects. The program also afforded me an invaluable opportunity to learn from my peers’ successes and pitfalls, as well as provided a safe space to push my personal and professional comfort zones. I will forever be grateful for this program and the way it changed my career trajectory.”

**Having a Voice in the Boardroom**

Dr. Hersh then retook the podium to discuss how to speak up in group situations. She noted that strong women leaders possess the same attributes as men, but display them in different ways—and this diversity of thoughts and people make an organization and team stronger. “If you don’t speak up, you’re not heard and your valuable ideas are not shared,” she said.

Despite the fact that women in medicine are typically bright, ambitious, successful, and highly capable, they often clam up at meetings or in the boardroom. “Women at work often experience a double-bind when speaking,” she noted. “They may be pushed aside by interruptions and doubt, and they may be perceived as overly aggressive. So, because they fear backlash, many women remain quiet.”

Citing articles from *ForbesWomen* by Shelley Zalis, Dr. Hersh offered six tips on how to make your voice heard:

1. **Give credit where credit is due.** The next time you hear a female colleague make a good point in a meeting, express your appreciation and acknowledge her. For instance, amplification, a tactic where a woman repeats another woman’s key point while crediting her, is quite effective in echoing the statement and discouraging others from taking credit for the idea.
2. **Open the floor to another woman in the meeting.** A woman can say to another female colleague after offering an insight, “Do you have any additional thoughts?” This tactic gives

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The following MS specialists have graciously agreed to respond to questions from readers of *Generations*.

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her colleague the opportunity to voice her opinion before anyone else—namely a male colleague—can step in and take over the floor.

3. **Practice speaking up whenever you can.** If there is a topic that is brought up at a meeting that you feel comfortable speaking about, do so. It will help give you confidence to speak up

during other points in the meeting. The more often you speak, the easier it'll become.

4. **Don't start with a negative.** Try not to begin your comment or question with, "This may be a stupid/silly question, but..." When you start off with a statement like that, you're already casting doubt on yourself.
5. **Be mindful of your tone.** It's not only the words you use but also your tone of voice that impacts your credibility. Even if you are worried about what people may be thinking, speak with a steady voice and an even tone. If you speak confidently, you come across as more prepared and diligent. If you sound unsure of yourself, others will pick up on it and question your commitment to your statement or ask.
6. **Stand on your own two feet.** Be proud of your voice and accomplishments and don't be afraid to speak with confidence. Don't rely on others to stand up for you.

Dr. Hersh reported that based on research conducted by Rindy Anderson, PhD, of Florida Atlantic University, several vocal attributes can work against women when they are trying to be perceived as lead-

ers. They include having a voice that is too high or low; not sounding authoritative; having vocal fry (a crackle or pop produced by trying to talk in a low register); and ending statements as if they are questions. She suggested viewing a 4-minute NPR video "Talking While Female" for further information and advice on how to modulate your voice for the greatest effect.

### Summary

Dr. Hersh concluded by saying, "Women in medicine are faced with intrinsic and unique challenges. Learning and adopting skills to advance in her profession is paramount for career growth, promotion, and ultimately greater workplace satisfaction." She noted that highly visible platforms such as the CMSC are critical for women to network and learn from each other. "Ultimately, skill-building in the workplace is a continued lifelong effort, and invoking confidence and embracing self-promotion will yield greater success," she said. "We are proud that we can offer hands-on opportunities through this symposium to share ideas in a motivated, enthusiastic, and safe space."



## 2022 CMSC ANNUAL MEETING

June 1-4, 2022

Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center  
National Harbor, Maryland

[www.mscares.org/2022](http://www.mscares.org/2022)