

Health and Well-Being

Don't Let A Chronic Disease Disrupt Your Life

(NAPSA)—When it comes to resolutions, many people vow to lose weight or stop smoking, but for people living with a chronic disease, such as multiple sclerosis (MS), resolutions take on a new meaning.

Every hour of every day, someone is diagnosed with MS. While MS is a chronic and disabling disease of the central nervous system, many people with MS continue with their normal daily lives—work, spending time with friends and family, and the activities that they enjoy.

Rosalind Joffe, 56, who lives in Newton, Massachusetts, has been living with her MS for nearly 30 years. After being diagnosed, Joffe decided to take charge of her future. It's what she has done since that moment that makes her story an inspiration for the more than 400,000 Americans, mostly women, who have MS.

Building on her experience of living with a chronic disease Joffe founded her own executive career coaching business. She is dedicated to helping others with a chronic illness develop the skills they need to succeed in their careers. Joffe firmly believes that living with a chronic disease does not preclude living a full and successful life.

"I've lived with multiple sclerosis for 30 years and I believe I am healthy and as active as ever because I made the decision to turn this disease into a positive," says Joffe. "I created my own business dedicated to helping others become successful in their careers," says Joffe. "I also chose a once-weekly effective therapy that fits my active lifestyle."

Finding that right solution for Joffe didn't happen all at once.

"For two years, I took Copaxone (glatiramer acetate), a daily injectable treatment, but the injection site reactions on my skin became unbearable," explains



Rosalind Joffe advises others with MS to "pay attention to yourself and find that place in yourself that can balance your priorities in life with those of everyone around you."

Joffe. "After discussions with my neurologist, I decided to switch to once-weekly AVONEX (Interferon beta-1a), which I have now been on for over seven years."

Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, but the unpredictable physical and emotional effects can last a lifetime. Symptoms of MS range from numbness in the limbs to paralysis or loss of vision. While disease progression, severity and symptoms in any one person cannot be predicted, advances in research and treatment are giving hope to those affected by the disease. Rosalind's experience has been positive due to her personal decisions, but please note that individual experiences may vary.

"The goal of treating your MS is to reduce the physical disability and progression of the disease," says Joffe. "That's why it is so important for people with a chronic disease to find an effective therapy early that they can start with and stay on for the long run. Knowing that my MS is under

control allows me to focus on what I love—helping others with a chronic disease be successful in their careers."

To create a positive outlook, Joffe suggests people living with a chronic disease to consider adopting the following resolution tips:

- Ask for what you need to do your job successfully. This is not as easy as it sounds, but it is also not as difficult. Make a list of what you can no longer do and figure out what would make a difference and is a reasonable request. Develop a plan by identifying who it would affect and what it would take to accomplish.

- Explore what you can do differently. Sometimes, you just cannot do the activities you once did—whether it is in the workplace or at home. You might need to "reinvent." In the workplace, it might mean a different job in the same organization, a different one within the same industry or an entirely different job that capitalizes on your talents, hobbies and skills. At home, it might just be a different way of performing an activity.

- Find the strengths you thought you never had. Sometimes, we need to push ourselves a little harder to see that there are reserves we did not think we had. Too often when you live with a chronic disease such as MS, the disease can seem so overwhelming to face. Surround yourself with positive thinkers so that your spirit rebounds.

Another resolution suggestion Joffe offers is, "pay attention to yourself and find that place in yourself that can balance your priorities in life with those of everyone around you."

For more information about MS and treatment options, please visit MSActiveSource.com or AVONEX.com. AVONEX has been proven effective for up to three years in clinical trials.

Note to Editors: Rosalind Joffe is an MS advocate and is from time to time compensated for her time and travel costs by Biogen Idec. However, Rosalind did not receive compensation for her participation in this interview.

Indication: AVONEX (Interferon beta-1a) is approved by FDA to treat relapsing forms of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) to decrease the number of flare-ups and slow the occurrence of some of the physical disability that is common in people with MS. AVONEX is approved for use in people who have experienced a first attack and have lesions consistent with MS on their MRI.

Important Safety Information

AVONEX can cause serious side effects, so before you start taking AVONEX, you should talk with your doctor about the possible benefits of AVONEX and its possible side effects to decide if AVONEX is right for you.

Sometimes interferons, including AVONEX, make people feel sad. If you are taking AVONEX, and feel unusually sad, you should tell a family member or friend right away and call your doctor as soon as possible.

Some people have had severe allergic reactions, a drop in their red or white blood cell levels, a drop in the cells that help form blood clots, heart problems, changes in their thyroid function or seizures.

Your liver may be affected by taking AVONEX and a few patients have developed severe liver injury. Your health care provider may ask you to have regular blood tests to make sure that your liver is working properly. If your skin or the whites of your eyes become yellow or if you are bruising easily you should call your doctor immediately.

AVONEX has not been studied in pregnant women. If you become pregnant while taking AVONEX, you should stop taking AVONEX immediately, tell your doctor, and consider enrolling in the AVONEX Pregnancy Registry by calling 1-800-456-2255.

Most people who take AVONEX have flu-like symptoms (fever, chills, sweating, muscle aches, and tiredness) early during the course of therapy. For many people, these symptoms lessen or go away over time. Talk to your doctor if these symptoms continue longer than the first few months of therapy, or if they are difficult to manage.

For more information, refer to the patient Medication Guide in the full product information available at www.AVONEX.com. This information is not intended to replace discussions with a health care provider.