

## Featured Charity: MSAA

The Multiple Sclerosis Association of America (MSAA) was honored at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC). MSAA was recognized for its poster, “A Needs Assessment Survey of MS Patients and Care Partners” which received the Berlex Award for the Best Poster in Patient and Family Education in Multiple Sclerosis.

MSAA’s award-winning poster gave the results of an MSAA survey of 2,085 patients and care partners. The survey was developed to gather information for a better understanding of the needs of the MS community and how MSAA can help.

Overall, the survey revealed that MS education was considered to be of greatest value. Rehabilitation and therapeutic programs were rated as the most important among unmet needs for MS patients. The survey assessed three areas: (1) the informational and educational needs of the MS community (2) programs that are currently offered by MSAA; and (3) programs the MD community would like to have offered to them.

The results of the first section found information on new medicine, treatment, and research were the greatest perceived needs. Some of the other areas that were ranked highly in the survey were information about exercise, fatigue management, better problem-solving and coping skills, along with complementary and alternative medicine.

In the second set of questions, clients were asked to choose from a list of 13 programs and services available to them and to rank their top three. Publications and brochures were rated as the most-important service offered by MSAA; this was followed by educational awareness events; and programs which combine social activities with therapeutic benefits, such as water exercise and Tai Chi.

The last set of questions asked participants to choose potential programs. MSAA was able to conclude that rehabilitation services are needed most, as well as services that provide skills, encouragement and support.

MSAA’s poster was authored by Amanda Montague, EdM, MSAA’s western regional director; Robert Rapp, MAPA, MSAA’s vice president for programs & evaluation; Jack Burks, MD, MSAA’s vice president and chief medical officer; and Gary Cutter, Ph. D., professor of biostatistics and head of the section on research methods and clinical trials, Department of Biostatistics, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health. MSAA will utilize the results of the Needs Assessment Survey in identifying and developing future programs and services for individuals with MS.